The Politician As Performer:
A Practical and Theoretical Assessment

By
Kimberley D Mullins

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The School of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Northumbria at Newcastle

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Abstract

The following thesis examines the possibility that the contemporary Western political leader can be assessed and understood as a performer. It subsequently highlights the various repercussions of this statement, from theoretical, practical, historical and cultural perspectives. Through an extensive, multi-disciplinary literature review and case specific examples, the author argues that researching the politician as a performer has both practical and theoretical value.

Included in this review are analyses of key contemporary issues surrounding political performance. The various uses of contemporary media, including the skills and semiotics that they generate, are discussed. Questions are raised regarding the audience's ability to interpret the information they receive through mediated performance. A working definition of audience is developed, to include those who consume and interpret political performance.

Also explored in relation to political performance are questions of contemporary celebrity, performativity, and feminism. The thesis suggests that not only is the politician a performer, but that the related theories of performance have an impact on political dialogue at a variety of levels. As is highlighted in the thesis, existing literature has not examined the politician from this perspective. Therefore the work contributes to the body of knowledge around performance and cultural studies.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that the following thesis entitled "The Politician As Performer: A Practical and Theoretical Assessment" is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other award.

Kimberley D Mullins

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Introduction

Throughout my formal training as a performer, I was still actively involved in politics in Canada. When questioned about my academic activities by those in political circles, I was generally met with some surprise and invariably with the question of why I would pursue two interests that were "so different".

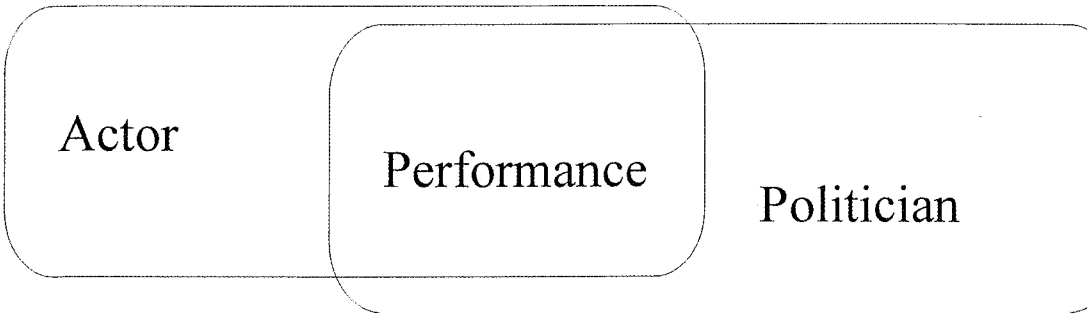
The idea that these two professions were in some way structurally opposed came as something of a surprise. In my experience the two professions shared many commonalities. The training I received as a performer was continually put to use in political work. Vocal technique (particularly intonation, breath control, and diction) was tremendously useful in public speaking engagements. The skills of improvisation were easily applied to impromptu debate and speech writing. Classes in acting for film and television gave me the advantage of increased confidence and skill when communicating through audio-visual media. Studies in movement increased my awareness of the significance of each action onstage. Even my experience with stage-management, theatrical costume, lighting and set-design informed my decision making in regards to the organization of public forums, rallies and town hall meetings.

These initial and superficial responses were enough to convince me that the politician and the performer have more in common than is commonly recognised. Therefore I was not surprised to find, in my initial reading, that the use of performance training in political life is in fact an ancient tradition.

Political activity and performance activity have had consistent and direct interaction. The two entities influence and inform the actions of the other. Political regimes and governments have historically sought to control and influence the performing arts as a means of exerting social control. In many parts of North America and Europe, non-commercial performance is dependant upon funding and support from governmental organizations and is therefore subject to the restrictions of that funding. Likewise, performance is often used as a political tool in social movements: even anti-government protests can take the form of performance.

These connections belie an entirely more intricate and subtle similarity. The relationship between performance and politics operates on a level that is more symbiotic. The practitioners of the political and the performance stage share, if not a common purpose, then at least a common platform upon which they are required to exhibit certain skills, techniques and knowledge necessary to any public form of communication.

The traditionally established relationships between the worlds of actor and politician have been the subject of studies for generations. Theatre of protest, government sponsored censorship and influential performance have been observed, recorded and analysed, while the more practical commonalities, such as audience, media and presentation are at best skimmed over and, more frequently, completely ignored. It is the purpose of this study, to explore the relationship between the politician and the performer at a level that extends beyond the traditionally accepted norms and thereby gain some understanding and insight into the potentially significant world of shared experience between the actor and the politician.



Aims and Objectives

Before engaging in such a dissection, however, it is important to question the purposes and aims of the study. It is certainly not the intention of this work to imply that the politician and actor are wholly similar. Such an assessment would not do justice to the extensive skills each requires to be successful in their field, beyond that of presentational knowledge. It is also not the intention of the study to suggest that a politician could or should maintain power solely by implementing performance techniques, or to suggest that any skilled performer would necessarily make a good politician. Rather, as the diagram attempts to illustrate, this study examines a portion of each discipline through the overlapping commonalities in the theory, practice, history and interpretation of performance.

Though the central focus is performance analysis, this study has evolved into a multi-disciplinary work, combining performance studies and political analysis with key ideas from sociology, cultural theory, history, business studies and media studies. Performance and politics are arguably the two most pervasive forms of social communication, and as a result their influences are intricately intertwined with other disciplines.

Methodology

The following is comparative and exploratory research in the area of political performance. As this is a new area of consideration it was my belief that the research design should consider three important questions: a) whether or not the politician could be conceptualized as a performer, b) how the language surrounding the political performer could be understood c) the implications of an understanding of political performance.

This was primarily conducted through an extensive literature review and the analysis of existing data including various political and historical examples. In designing this research, the issue of primary vs. secondary data was fully considered. It was determined at this stage that secondary data provided sufficient material to conduct a thorough analysis. Also considered was the fact that the study of political performance is largely the study of mediated performance, in many instances the secondary data included performances in that mediated form.

It is first necessary to establish a theoretical and practical understanding of the issue before extending the research into primary data collection. Although that extension was not possible within the context of this thesis, I consider it to be an important next step in this area of research. It is my hope that this research will provide the basis for a "political performance lens" that can be applied to primary data in subsequent research.

In this context, the literature review included a historical overview of the linkages between the politician and the performer, an exploration of contemporary performance theory (including sociological performance theory) in the context of the political

performer, an exploration of various political examples in order to apply and illustrate relevance of the theory, and extensive analysis of the concept of the political audience.

The historical overview was included to provide a necessary context to the scope of the study, and to establish that the issue of political performance has an established history of discussion. In particular it highlights how historical attitudes toward performance and the performer could affect contemporary understanding of political performance.

The use of political examples differs from case studies in the scope and detail of their purpose. The examples throughout are used to illustrate specific points, they are not intended to be detailed case studies.

Although the research has demanded a wide scope of survey in terms of academic discipline, it has been consciously limited in terms of political focus. Although drawing upon various historical examples, the political illustrations are primarily limited to contemporary national-level political leaders from Canada, the US and the UK. The principle reason for this decision is logistical: there is a vast amount of information regarding politicians and political activity available within these countries. Though they have different systems of government and different social and cultural norms, they are leaders in media and communications technology and as such provide ample source material for a study of the politician.

There are also political and cultural considerations that would make additional comparisons more difficult. Shared language certainly provides a measure of cohesiveness. Additionally, the three countries used in the study have access to similar

media, established methods of mediating political performance through television, radio and other media. The extent to which media is pervasive in these cultures is also similar. They share similarities in social norms, for example, similar attitudes toward gender, education, justice and democratic government. Although these three countries have distinct political and social cultures, they do share certain sufficient common traits so as to make a shared analysis possible. In each chapter I seek to use examples of leaders from these countries to apply the theories, practices and beliefs of the performer to our contemporary political world.

Throughout the initial reading and planning for this thesis, I discovered that the area of political performance raised a significant number of questions and opportunities for research. Throughout the process, various methods of exploring these questions were contemplated, however, at this stage I felt it necessary to limit the scope of the study and the nature of the research. I feel that the methods used within this context are the most appropriate means of addressing the question.

With each passing day, media record and transmit the performances of politicians throughout the world and for each transmission there are audiences watching, questioning and interpreting what they see. Although it may be hidden under opaque terminology and confused approaches, political performance is a subject that is continually being debated whether we, as performance theorists, take an active interest or not. I undertook this project with the firm belief that the theories, practices, and experiences of performance have something to add to our understanding of communication at an academic, public and political level. I believe that the following research will affirm that hypothesis.

Chapter 1 - History

Historical Perspectives

It is near impossible to find a historical period in which the politician has not been expected to be a skilled public communicator. Effective communication has consistently been one of the primary tools of the politician. (Atkinson, 1994, p 1) Since the mass media and wide spread literacy are relatively recent advancements, communication has, for the larger part of human history, been conducted through oration. Skilled public communication, or performance, can therefore be considered an "ancient art" and "a major academic subject for 2000 years."(Butler in Atkinson, 1994, Forward)

Oration is defined by Bowen in *A History of Western Education* as "performance", with its counterpart, "rhetoric" defined as the preparation that precedes the presentation, including the arrangement of some kind of script and any rehearsal that may accompany it. (Bowen, 1971, p 180) Major ancient philosophers such as Cicero, Isocrates and Demosthenes published volumes on the general belief that public service was "afforded by skill in speaking."(Bowen, 1971, p 180) Bowen summarised their argument in the following way, "Affairs of the state were conducted orally wherever possible, ability to marshal ideas and present them clearly and persuasively was a marked advantage."(Bowen, 1971, p 180)

Ancient Roman educator Quintillian agreed with this belief, and argued that the education of any future public servant would be incomplete without specific training in oratory.

> "Stage actors demonstrate this. They add so much charm to the greatest poets that their productions give us infinitely more pleasure when heard than when read...And if Delivery has this power to produce anger, tears, or anxiety over matters which we know to be fictitious and unreal, how much more powerful must it be when we really believe!"
>
> (Quintillian, 2001, Book 11, p 87)

Quintillian addresses the fact that political performers must learn from their peers in the professional performing arts and establishes that the methods and conventions of popular entertainment or artistry should influence the style and form of political communication. He even argues that a "comic actor" should be engaged to instruct the future orator in several methods of public delivery. (Quintillian, 2001, Book 1, p 237)

Quintillian did not shy away from drawing comparison and taking direction from professional performers, and highlighted the acting techniques that he considered particularly relevant to the education of the future public speaker. (Quintillian, 2001, Book 1, p 237-238) These observations indicate that he understood that the orator and the professional actor were linked not just by skills but also by an audience who would view them through the same eyes. Since both public oration and public performances were likely to have taken place in town squares, amphitheatres and at festivals, it is likely that the two often shared a stage.

The audience that came to be entertained by the play was also there to be informed by the politician. Because they encompassed the same physical space, their physical actions would have had similar depth and size, so as to reach the entire crowd. Gestures and expressions would have meaning according to the conventions of the day. In his *Institutio Oratoria,* Quintillian goes into great detail in describing the conventions of

gesture on the stage, and how the symbols would create meaning for a political audience. (Quintillian, 2001, Book 11, p 121-141)

Language would also be informed by its use in drama. In presenting a speech, the use of language is vitally important in knowing how to obtain the audience's support and attention. Similarly, the politician and the performer now compete for the attention of the same television audience, who have their own expectations and conventions. Quintillian was aware of the semiotics of performance viewing and those effects on the deconstruction of both kinds of public presentation.

As is the case with contemporary concerns about performance, there were those in Quintillian's time who saw the potential for abuse in the skills of the performer. Quintillian concluded that only 'good men' could maintain the self-control required of a skilled public speaker. His writing is particularly clear on this, stating "I am not only saying that the orator should be a good man, but that no one can be an orator unless he is a good man." (Quintillian, 2001, Book 12, p 199)

He goes on to explain this assertion, "Bad men...because they despise opinion and have no idea of what is right, sometimes even forget to keep up the pretence and so state their case without any modesty, and make their assertions without shame." (Quintillian, 2001, Book 12, p 203)

Such an argument is still being debated, in some form, in contemporary political writings. An example can be found in Miller's 2000 study of George W. Bush's public performances. He writes that Bush's well-documented disinterest in public performance

does not indicate a deep sincerity, but a casual disinterest in the public he serves. Miller writes that Bush's "body language", his unease in front of an audience or camera, his poor diction and his frequent misuse of language are indicative of a callousness that often goes unnoticed and unaddressed in mainstream media. He goes on to suggest that Bush's frequent decision to speak without a prepared text, despite consistent errors in pronunciation and syntax indicates that he has little concern for the opinion of his electorate, and equally little interest in the details of government. (Miller, 2000, p 14)

Of course, whether or not Miller's point supports Quintillian's belief depends upon the individual's perception of these characteristics as essentially good or bad. According to Miller, Bush fails to maintain a carefully constructed persona because he is inherently a 'bad' leader. Whether or not this proves he is a 'bad' man is an issue of some debate, but it does promote the theory that a 'good' persona can be contradicted by an individual who is uninterested in doing so. At the very least, it indicates that Quintillian's debate is ongoing.

Quintillian also addresses the issue of 'spontaneity as truth' that pervades our own analysis of political performance. He makes a strong response to the suggestion that a 'natural', or untrained performer would be 'better', that is to say more skilled, in public debate. He observes that the unskilled speaker, though passionate, is more likely to make errors in his or her performance, or to generate meaning where it does not exist. (Quintillian, 2001, Book 12, p 303) He asserts that even for an orator to improvise, that individual must be well practiced in the techniques of public speaking and in the topic of discussion. (Quintillian, 2001, Book 10, p 373)

The 1984 conversation analysis conducted by Max Atkinson would seem to support the idea that the prepared performer is at an advantage against the unprepared orator. In his book entitled *Our Masters Voices*, he writes that in the extended analysis of "spellbinding oratory" it becomes clear that it is not an intangible gift or an unidentifiable quality in the speaker. Rather, it involves "the mastery of a relatively small number of technical skills that can be identified and described." The more important point was the performer's ability to use these skills confidently and quickly, without drawing too much attention to their application. (Atkinson, 1994, p 121)

Atkinson cites the example of Margaret Thatcher and Michael Foot. Both were party leaders and responsible for a large amount of communication with the public. Thatcher was a relatively well trained political performer, having undertaking coaching and practice in a variety of performance techniques. Foot was not a trained orator and, it would seem, did not rehearse his performances. Atkinson observed that Foot was consistently given less positive reviews than Thatcher and equated this to technical weakness in script preparation, verbal and nonverbal behaviour. Atkinson equates Foot's reputation as a rambling speaker to these technical weaknesses and notes that when film footage of Thatcher and Foot are shown side by side there is a clearly unfavourable comparison. (Atkinson, 1994, p 150) Thatcher was consistently rewarded with applause, while Foot's points were regularly met with silence. (Atkinson, 1994, p 151)

Though Quintillian was the most adamant and detailed advocate of performance training for the public speaker, other Greek and Roman philosophers debated performance in public address. Demosthenes and Cicero "offered instruction in the art

of holding audiences and winning sympathetic reaction from them." (Butler in Atkinson, 1994, Forward) Denton and Woodward also note that over 2000 years ago the art of performance coaching was an active profession. They cite the example of a Sicilian named Corax who was known to have received payment for instructing poor speakers in the arts of performance. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 203)

Some philosophers differed in their ideas of what should constitute public performance. Socrates was known to favour more flamboyant performance or "show-off stuff" (McClellend, 1996, p165) that provided both entertainment and education for the audience. Plato's approach followed more closely that of the dialectic style. His students were encouraged to debate for purely philosophical and judicial reasons.

Plato did not encourage performance in debate or onstage as entertainment. He felt that the presentation of such heightened emotion would undoubtedly leave an imprint on the individual, thus altering his "essential self" and detracting from purely philosophical debate. Those who supported the dialectic style of public speaking also understood that in a democracy the political performer was more likely to gain popularity than the non-performer. They recognised the potential danger of this system, noting that the people will often choose to be led by those who "propose what the people are already predisposed to believe is right and tell them that they are right to want what they already want."(McClellend, 1996, p 165) Hence their reliance on reason and justice as a means of preparation for rule.

Their arguments are reminiscent of contemporary attitudes. Their dislike of the methods of 'mob oratory', for whatever noble reasons, did not make the existence of the political

performer any less of a reality. This became even more apparent as the democracies developed and the people were given greater power. Whereas performance had always been inherent in political life, it was now taking on greater levels of importance. If those who were naturally skilled at manipulating the emotions of the public could be elected to rule them, then those with education and better intentions should be given training to allow them equal competition.

Most historians and political scientists examine the politician or leader from the perspective of their public works, but few have understood that it is not an individual's achievements that garners them the historical title of a great leader, but the public recognition of those achievements. One of the few philosophers who recognised this was Niccilo Machiavelli. In his works, particularly the infamous political handbook *The Prince,* he outlined an entire strategy of performance politics for the benefit of his leader.

One of the most notorious and frequently quoted aspects of his writing is the assertion that it is more important for a successful leader to display the qualities of the ideal leader than it is to possess them. In fact, he suggests that consistently maintaining positive qualities can be detrimental, while simply performing them can be of great benefit. (Machiavelli, 1961, p 100)

This would seem, in some ways, to contradict Quintillian's assertion that only 'good' men could become skilled orators. That is, if the definition of 'good' included the qualities and behaviours that Machiavelli listed, which would imply a man of, "...compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man."

Machiavelli's Prince was expected to have a "...flexible disposition, varying as fortune and circumstances dictate...he should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary."(Machiavelli, 1961, p 101) However, the context of these statements should be considered. Machiavelli's advice to the prince was intended not as a dark map for personal power, but as a means of maintaining a secure and powerful leader for the nation.

Machiavelli's Italy was in an almost constant state of war, with a cast of leaders unable to see beyond their own interests and maintain stability in the country. It is more than possible that Machiavelli saw a ruthless leader as a strong leader, a means of peace and therefore an ultimate good. It can perhaps be said that Quintillian's assertion is applicable to the overall intention of the Machiavellian leader, if not to their every action in the course of leadership.

Machiavelli's observations have much in common with his contemporary counterparts. He has an understanding for the importance of the political performer in maintaining public support. He fulfils a role similar to that of the political strategist in assisting the development and communication of the persona. Significantly, he is describing the requirements of performance without actually stating that it is indeed performance. Once again the word "appears" is used to imply 'performs', since the cultivation of such impressions requires an active effort.

Such descriptions have changed little since the time of Machiavelli. Ambiguous terms still abound in discourse regarding political performance. In her article on the 2000 US presidential campaign, Borger raises the point that any public appearance carries not

only the weight of the topic to be discussed by the candidate, but also of the expectation of whatever image-based issue has generated attention in the media. In the very opening line of her article, she outlined the dramatic "motivation" of the personas involved in the debate (in this case, then US presidential candidates George W. Bush and Al Gore) by writing that Bush was responsible for appearing "...up to the task" while Gore "...has to seem likable." (Borger, 2000, p 26) Note that the emphasis of her work is not on whether or not the individual actually *is* either of those things. She recognises what is more significant in the public eye is that the candidate manages to project the *image* or appearance of it during a speech. Machiavelli was more openly illustrating that those appearances are as important to leadership as the skills themselves. It is necessary to create a persona that is suitably skilled and admirable, freeing the individual from the requirement of constantly proving himself. For example, Machiavelli wrote "...if your generosity is good and sincere it may pass unnoticed and it will not save you from being reproached for its opposite." (Machiavelli, 1961, p 92) Had Machiavelli lived in the current era of the mass media, he would likely have been applauded and well paid for his skilful observations.

Machiavelli's political writings were received at the time of their publication with shock, and continue to be equated with ruthlessness and tyranny. Even students of anti-theatrical prejudice and performance see it not as a victim of previous prejudice, but as a catalyst to it. Barish writes, "...small wonder that his ethic of deceit should have fed the existing prejudice against the theater and intensified the long-standing equation between acting and duplicity."(Barish, 1981, p 98)

The uproar it continues to cause cannot be solely in response to the actions recommended by the author, since they are no more than the compiled observations of the actions of many other successful leaders, and therefore in constant practice. (McClellend, 1996, p 152) Nor can it be disapproval of the pursuit of power for its own sake, since it is stated several times throughout the work that its intention is to advise the prince so that he will be able to remain strong and safeguard the kingdom as a whole. In his conclusion Machiavelli writes,

> "...Italy is waiting to see who can be the one to heal her wounds...and cleanse those sores which have now been festering for so long. See how Italy beseeches God to send someone to save her from those barbarous cruelties and outrages; see how eager and willing the country is to follow a banner, if only someone will raise it..."
>
> (Machiavelli, 1961 p 135)

Machiavelli can be interpreted as a passionate patriot, interested in preserving the peace and security of his country, rather than in putting an unsuitable leader into a position of extreme power.

The outrage over the work can be more closely attributed to its 'profanation' or its exposure of the backstage work that must take place in order for a politician to be a successful leader. 'Profanation', as described by Schechner and Appel, occurs when the projected image, or the status quo, is threatened by a member of the 'team'. The rest of the team then attempts to justify or adapt to this by disengaging the individual from the mainstream, by labelling him as corrupt, evil or insane. "Profanation is not so much the breaking of a rule made explicit...as the exposure of the rule of the rules, the principle or principles that are so fundamental for the holding together of the regulative system that they cannot be formulated."(Schecner and Appel, 1990, p 197) Machiavelli's clear description of the backstage actions demanded of a successful leadership caused an

uncomfortable reality to be made obvious, and he has subsequently been dismissed as something of an evil genius. This is compounded by the dramatic nature of Machiavelli's writing. In his introduction to the translation of Machiavelli's work, George Bull writes,

> "The artist in Machiavelli, as much as the analyst, is often responsible for the shocks...he constantly dramatised his remarks and exaggerated his conclusions for the sake of impact...When all is said by way of excuse for the morality of *The Prince*, it remains the case that its code is one which most men, even if they as often as not subscribe to it in practice, find repellent when it is justified in theory."
>
> (Bull, 1961, p 23)

His works would have perhaps stood in better context next to the political observations of Aristotle, Plato or even Quintillian. Understanding the environment from which it arose, it cannot be assumed that the advice would not serve the people over whom it attempted to rule, since a strong and consistent state was certainly better than a weak one that would be subject to frequent attempts at conquest. A country with a leader skilled in public communication is more likely to fare better internationally than one who is governed by a less competent communicator. Likewise, the leader who can communicate well with the public is granted a higher approval rating, and therefore has more opportunity to invoke authority and get their plans into action. Considering the value that is now placed on the opinion poll, this notion has a very contemporary application. Machiavelli was among the first to suggest that in political leadership, reality matters only as much as its interpretation.

Although often overlooked, Machiavelli's professional experience as a dramatist is significant to the understanding of how he developed his interpretation of leadership. Machiavelli was a skilled playwright and, perhaps as such, was more willing to accept

the need for performance in maintaining an ongoing saga of the state. McClelland summarises Machiavelli's approach to leadership as an elaborate play script. The Prince's motivation is to play his role well enough so that the other performers willingly suspend their disbelief and allow him the power to continue leading. This requires him to use all available means, including making use of the setting, costumes and background that support his persona. (McClelland, 1996, p 165) Machiavelli was suggesting that the leader who wraps himself in the institution of his position is more likely to entice the audience to see him as a leader, and not an average individual.

Barish comes to a similar conclusion, asserting that Machiavelli pre-dated Goffman in his theatrical concept of human behaviour. (Barish, 1981, p 96) It is certainly true that his observations are still keenly applicable. Miller even offers the suggestion that "...if Machiavelli were alive today, he would probably update his book with some reflections on how our Presidents use television, and vice versa..." (Miller, 1988, p 79) It would be unnecessary. Within his observations, written in 1513, Machiavelli encompassed the requirements of the political performer in any age, beyond media and technology. With his dramatist's eye and flair for writing, Machiavelli encompasses a Nietzschian concept of the philosopher/artist, who, as Geraldine Harris observes, "represented a rejection of the binary oppositions between life and art, the real and the mimetic," (Harris, 1999, p 89) by the very nature of their existence.

Dramatists would seem to have an advantage in their ability to view the world through the eyes of the theatre, and in the observation of leadership this can prove particularly important. Machiavelli may have translated his dramatic observations into a political manual, but other writers have made their observations clear through the more indirect

means of fiction. In the works of William Shakespeare, perhaps the most famous dramatist of all time, one can find examples of political uses for performance.

As Hilton writes, "Shakespeare's belief in the special nature of performance is implicit throughout his plays and made occasionally explicit in speeches on the relationship between the world and the stage." (Hilton, 1987, p 12) These explorations on the world and stage relationship often have their basis in the relationship between the stage and the politician. His characters continually recreate themselves in different situations and before different people, often for political gain. Wikander notes that Shakespeare's villains are particularly frightening because they are so skilled in hiding their intentions through performance. He writes that "...they are at home there, native to the element." (Wikander, 2002, p 140) But to limit this description to the villains is to dismiss the inherent theatricality of his great political heroes as well. While Richard III may use performance to gain support and power, so does Hamlet, Mark Antony and Coriolanus. All the great leaders in Shakespeare's world are acknowledgements of the fact that performance was required to establish their positions. The inspiration for this must have been drawn, in part, from Shakespeare's own observations of political dealings in the court of Elizabeth I.

Shakespeare, like Machiavelli, can be read to predate Goffman's work by acknowledging the performance that takes place in the lives of every individual. This is epitomised in Jacques' famous speech from *As You Like It*, in which he observes;

> "All the world's a stage...
> The men and women merely players,
> And they have their exits and entrance,
> And one man in his time plays many parts..."
> (Shakespeare in Alexander, 1994, p 145)

In Shakespeare's plays, as in life, characters reinvented themselves in various situations, sometimes on purpose, to achieve a goal and sometimes as the result of an event or self-overhearing. Richard III, who is the master performer, plays every kind of role: brother, lover, leader, friend, tyrant, son. In both his conscious and unconscious changes, he establishes the fact that no one thing defines him, just as no one personality trait can define any person. In each situation, Richard plays up those aspects of himself that are most appropriate and constantly adapts his projected persona to meet his immediate needs. The characters in Richard III (and therefore, we can conclude, Shakespeare himself) have a keen awareness of the need for public performance in order to win public approval. The audience, in this case both the theatrical audience and the unseen masses of Richard's England, wish to find comfort in the reluctant leader, he who must be forced into governing by the demands of the people and the belief that he is doing a service to his country. Blatant desire for political power does nothing to turn the support of the audience to the actor. This is observed by Buckingham,

> "Intend some fear.
> Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit.
> And look you get a prayer book in your hand,
> And stand between two churchmen good my lord,
> And be not easily won to our requests.
> Play the maid's part: still answer nay and take it."
> (Shakespeare in Alexander, 1994, p 354)

This is a sentiment echoed by the political observer Irvine Schiffer in his study of charismatic leaders. He writes that the leader who attempts to gain popular support should never publicly acknowledge their desire for power, even in the few hours preceding an election. He suggests that obliviousness to the fervour surrounding an election is the first opportunity for the candidate to appear as a statesman and not a politician. (Schiffer, 1973, p 163)

However, Richard is not entirely successful in his attempt to gain public support through his performance. Shakespeare supports Quintillian's assertion that a 'bad man' will loose hold on his performance and display his 'insincerity'. The population of Richard's England were not won over by his claims to dislike power. His ultimate gains were largely through violence, and not his performance.

That said, Shakespeare was not indifferent to the need for conscious performance on the part of the political leader, as is evident through the characters of *Coriolanus* and Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar.*

From the beginning of *Coriolanus,* Shakespeare contrasts the effective political communicator, in the form of the leader Menenius, with the disdainful Caius Martius. Both exhibit contempt for the lower classes of the city, as is evident when Menenius declares that "Rome and her rats are at the point of battle", (Shakespeare in Alexander, 1994, p 398) equating the city's working population with vermin. Yet he has a clear understanding that those "rats" hold power over the esteemed governing class when they are joined together over a common issue, as is the case with the food shortage that opens *Coriolanus*. His clever communication with the people has the effect of ensuring their support, cooling their tempers and distracting them from their revolt. Despite his evidenced distain, the plebeians consider him "one that hath always loved the people" (Shakespeare in Alexander, 1994, p.397) and he benefits from a certain amount of personal and professional security as a result.

Caius Marcius, in contrast, is a man of more rigid morality, but his supposedly ethical resistance to an attempt at winning over the population has only the effect of making the

plebeians hate and fear him. Though he is affronted at the thought that they would assume the government was withholding food from them, he does not make the effort to describe this in terms of amazement or hurt, but with anger at their presumption and threats of violence. Therefore, although his attitude and the content of his response is essentially the same as Menenius, his inability and unwillingness to communicate with the plebeians ensures that he is faced with the anger of the citizens of Rome.

Following his triumph on the battlefield, he has some cause to win back the appreciation, if not affection, of the citizens, who wish to know about the wounds he has incurred in battle. But once again, he will not seek out the praise of the people for what he sees as his duty, nor will he lower himself to faking affection for the people in order to win a position on the counsel, saying,

> "I cannot
> Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them
> For my wound's sake to give their suffrage."
> (Shakespeare in Alexander, 1994, p 403)

Though his distaste for the crowd can be interpreted as a character flaw, it must be taken into some consideration. The ruling class of the time was even more separate from the common population than in today's society, and most of the government in *Coriolanus* express a distain for the common people. The other leaders, however, understand the need for performance and are willing to communicate with the lower classes in whatever manner is required for the smooth running of the city. They are dissembling politicians, whom Coriolanus perceives as cowards and liars. Coriolanus is, above all else, a soldier, therefore accustomed to a more visceral response to disapproval and perhaps less familiar with the diplomatic arts. His humility regarding the praise he

receives for his war efforts can be seen as a kind of vanity, and pride in itself, but at the same time his refusal to capitalize on the political currency of his wounds seems to be a misguided moral stance. Unlike the other leaders who would happily perform for the crowd, Coriolanus is no less than honest in his distain for those he would lead and his pride dictates his actions. Yet, as Rossiter points out, it is Caius Marcius who becomes a traitor to his people, despite his rigid morality.

> "Menenius's significance is one thread to take hold of the tragic pattern by: he is (what Marcius is not) a political mind which moves with the dialectic of events. As he can think (and will) dialectically, he remains true to the major loyalties; Rome and himself. Marcius, the man of principle, does not."
>
> (Rossiter in Brockman, 1977, 153)

Coriolanus would have perhaps done well to review Machiavelli's writings, since it is in this warrior's actions that the strategist's point becomes clear. The possession of skills or qualities is not necessarily enough to commend you to the population. In fact, they can be easily turned against you in the public opinion.

Mark Antony's ability to turn the crowd's favour in *Julius Caesar* is again an example of performance being put to use in politics, in this instance to more resounding success. Antony evokes the image of Caesar as a benevolent leader through a variety of tactics, including the reading of Caesar's will, in which the citizens are named as beneficiaries. As the sole voice in favour of the suddenly sainted Caesar, he associates himself with that role. He takes part in the public mourning and directs the emotions of the audience by making his own emotions evident.

"O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason.
Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause, till it come back to me."
(Shakespeare in Sisson, 1953, p 956)

The people are moved to action by Antony's work on the pulpit and directly turn upon the conspirators. His ability to communicate leads to great result, but it is also a warning to other orators: the audience who is swayed by one performance can be moved once again by another skilled presentation.

Shakespeare also recognised that a character is not fully established by what he or she does and says, but what others say and do in regards to them. As Harold Bloom writes, although we have some cause to be sceptical of Hamlet's high estimation of Fortinbras and Horatio, we are never at a loss as to Hamlet's own worth, because, "...everyone in the play, even Hamlet's enemies, somehow testifies to it." (Bloom, 1998, p 723) In contemporary society we tend, perhaps to too great an extent, to base our own judgements of political and social leaders on those of the popular media, and other political figures. Audiences seek both information and affirmation in what is said about political figures and how they are referred to by others, particularly television journalists, who attempt to interpret events for the benefit of the audience. Even skilled political performances are framed by television commentators, allowing the audience the option of accepting the proposed reading of an event, rather than forming individual opinions on the merits of personal observation and knowledge. For example, Miller writes that "When Sam Donaldson [American television news anchor] calls Reagan 'warm', and 'amiable', that opinion, casual or not, immediately takes on the pressure of a fact, and so Reagan becomes warm and amiable, even if he isn't."(Miller, 1988, p 85)

Public support from a respected member of society, often an older, more established statesman, will also help establish the politician as part of the institution of leadership. In order to cloak themselves in the institution that they seek to serve, politicians must often seek out the endorsement of other, more recognised political performers. The fact that major political and cultural figures spoke out in support of Bill Clinton during his impeachment is credited with aiding his high approval ratings. (Stromer & Jamieson in Axford & Huggins, 2001, p 186) And in 1988, George Bush's campaign program involving numerous supportive statements from former presidents and high ranking political officials has been noted as a contributing factor in his success (McNair, 1999, p 104).

This symbolic association with leadership provided the opportunity to evoke the power of the institution before actually inhabiting it. Goffman writes that in the case of an established social role, like that of leader, the "front" is in fact a "collective representation" established by all those on the performance team. The political performer finds that in assuming the leadership position, the rituals, which have been established prior to his arrival, are supportive of their attempts to gain public approval. Yet the performance within that existing structure will determine whether or not it will work in their favour. Goffman writes

> "Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to perform the given task or by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 27)

Political performance, along with the assessments of other political performers, is only effective insofar as the leader manages to successfully complete the tasks demanded of

his position. The audience may place credence in the suggestions of others, but their interest will quickly fade if they are unconvinced that the politician is able to 'perform the task' while maintaining the 'corresponding front'.

As the preceeding has established, performance for the benefit of the audience has long been recognised as a necessity of political life. Even in times of strict hierarchy and totalitarian rule those in positions of power had to establish and present a persona in order to maintain the support of the people. In the past, however, the ritual aspect of pubic ceremony was for the benefit of the larger public, while personal self-presentation and performance were reserved for a relatively small group of the ruling classes. Within democracies, the politician owed greater accountability to the population, and so the type of political performance altered to reflect the changing circumstances. But it is only with the advent of the popular mass media that political performance becomes entirely responsive to the audience at large.

This turn away from an elite power or party hierarchy and into the hands of the audience is much like the shift of the actor from the reliance on a patron to the reliance on the public. Wikander notes that early actors were at the mercy of their patrons. Their artistic options, choices of performance and even survival were controlled by the individuals who supported them. However, " ...with Garrick and the emergence of the modern actor, a new tyrant comes to rule: the audience."(Wikander, 2002, p 191)

Performing for the audience at large and attempting to make a living at it requires what has been referred to as a more 'majoritarian' approach. As Garrick and subsequent actors learned, their performances had to entertain the upper class citizens and the less

educated working classes. They had to work within conventions that appealed to all sections of society.

However, professional actors have the distinct advantage of being able to develop and perfect performance skills before finally appearing before the crowds. The political performer must do so usually without the benefit of extensive rehearsal or detailed training in the techniques specific to performance or to the various media they must use in order to communicate effectively to the public. Likewise, the audience who goes to see a theatrical production is aware of the context in which they are viewing the performance and can interpret the actions of those onstage without fear of being unduly manipulated. The political audience does not have the benefit of a full understanding of the skills politicians use on their stage, and are therefore deconstructing a performance without the benefit of recognizing that it is indeed a performance. This is due, in large part, to a historical trend towards the distrust of the performer.

The power of performance as a communicative tool is clearly not something that should be considered insignificant in dealing with political affairs. Performance can have a significant influence on how the audience and, indeed, the individual politicians view the role of leader. The very act of performing a ritualistic or institutional role can create a heightened sense of that reality, just as Hunt concluded that in the act of performing the role of leader, the individual essentially comes to embody it on a deeper level. (Hunt in Kellerman, 1984, p 173) This is essentially the same principle that Plato feared, prompting him to write his treaty against public performance, which, according to Barish, began a long term historical trend towards anti-theatricalism.

He cites Plato's writings as being opposed to performance primarily for its dependency on mimesis. Barish takes the point of view that his criticisms were indicative of a fear that individuals performing various roles would be inspired by those actions to pursue other incarnations of self in their everyday lives. That is to say, his fear was that as the citizens explored and imitated different personas in a production, they might aspire, in reality, to those lives they performed onstage; or at least awaken new parts of themselves, thus disturbing the ideal state that is a feature in much of Plato's political writings.

Barish summarises Plato's views on mimesis in the following way, "...in Plato's view, imitation is formative - those who imitate will tend to become what they imitate." (Barish, 1981, p 21) For our purposes, Plato's objections to performance are actually a great argument in favour of its use in politics. His writings against the theatre would suggest that those taking part would incorporate part of the character or persona they created into their unperformed selves. In contemporary politics, it is generally the objective of the politician to project the best aspects of himself as a leader and a citizen. If Plato's theories proved to be founded, this would mean that all those political leaders striving to prove their greatness to the public would actually become greater leaders.

Wikander comes to a similar conclusion,

> "The anti-theatrical notion that actors ran the moral risk of becoming like the bad characters they imitated, infected by the bad actions they performed, has a counterpart...Hypocrisy can itself work the opposite way: performing good actions in order to seem virtuous can habituate the performer to good action and gradually lead to true piety."
>
> (Wikander, 2002, p 28)

It is somewhat ironic that the writings that are attributed to the founding of the prejudice that contributes to the limited knowledge of performance in politics today should also be a great argument in favour of it.

Unfortunately, that point is historically moot. However we may apply these theories now, the reality is that Plato's distrust of the skilled performer was a foundation to what has become a general distrust of performance, and the process of its development. It has been employed continually by various theatrical and performance critics even to this day.

Though they may share a historical and philosophical foundation, there are significant distinctions between the anti-theatricalism of Plato's society and the contemporary incarnation of the sentiment. One such difference is the level of open-ness with which the subject is even discussed. The evolution of Plato's initial fears has resulted in political performance becoming an almost unconscious taboo, rather than a studied area of debate. Our current methods of political discourse tend to be quantitative: public opinion is measured in poll numbers and statistics. Even political theorists debate issues in terms of their statistical success. In Plato's day, the topic of performance and its effects on political discourse and public opinion were debated openly because performance and art in general were recognised as important and therefore potentially dangerous entities. This recognition facilitated greater understanding, if not agreement, and at least allowed the opportunity for a voiced opposition, an advancement over the current state of denial that seems to exist within the academic and journalistic discussions of contemporary society.

In his study entitled *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Barish notes "the stage provokes the most active and sustained hostility when it becomes a vital force in the life of a community." (Barish, 1981, p 66) Though he is most likely referring to the issues dealt with by professional performers and writers on a stage, his statement can also be applied to the political performer: Perhaps more than any other performer, the politician has the greatest opportunity to use performance to stir the audience to action. Likewise, one of the most vital aspects of any community is its leadership. Throughout history, the performances of charismatic leaders have threatened the established order and stirred the public to action. The professional stage may be a centre of idea development and creative thought, but its ability to stir the audience to direct and sustained action is limited. The politician can invoke the equally potent emotional responses without removing themselves or their ideas from the present reality.

Barish also notes that the enmity with which terms borrowed from the stage are used in conversation is indicative of their perceived power. The hostility with which the theatrical profession is viewed is clear in the common usage of the terminology. Language taken from any other art form is generally used to denote a positive association. To say that one moves like a dancer, or that a person's voice is like a symphony, or that a particularly lovely landscape is 'picturesque' is an attempt to use the imagery of art to suggest beauty. However, the evocation of theatrical images are often used, particularly by the media, as a negative or disparaging comment upon the actions of political leaders. References to 'a clever performance' or a 'staged event' all imply manipulation. An individual who is prone to 'theatrics' is considered hysterical. The description of a certain décor as 'stagy' implies a forced and superficial appearance. Unlike other forms of art, associations with the theatre are clearly not considered

positive. There seems to be little acknowledgement or even awareness of this bias. Few have gone so far as to question how or why the prejudice exists, or why such a performance would be necessarily negative. Yet almost universally, the terms of the theatre and the actor are reserved for derogatory use when used in comparison to the politician.

When outside the sanctioned and conventional locations, the performer can clearly generate a surprising amount of suspicion and distrust. In an environment so fearful of performance, it is hardly surprising that direct comparisons between the politician and the performer are avoided.

But if Plato's theories did initiate an anti-theatrical sentiment, it still remains to be seen how an explicit debate on the merits of performance in or outside the theatre have evolved into an implicit avoidance of any discussion at all.

In tracing the history of distrust toward the theatre, Barish's study focuses on how the long-term, centuries old bias against both performers and the theatre in general has translated into our contemporary culture. Though the bias has something of a clear historical lineage, its various perpetrators have cited several arguments in their defence. Particularly significant are the following theatrical criticisms that have arisen through the ages:

1) That in performing a character that is not like one's own (what in Barish's book is generally referred to as mimesis), one will gradually assume the qualities, good or bad, that one imitates onstage.

2) That the very act of performing is bad because it generates extreme emotion.

3) That the actor is inherently immoral because of the lifestyle he or she must lead.

4) That the theatre is immoral because of the content of its works.

5) That the work of the actor is, by nature, hypocrisy.

These points, though significant individually, are not easily separated into distinct features of study. In most anti-theatrical writings or studies, these elements tend to overlap broadly. While many of these issues can be said to have little direct effect on the political performer (beyond their contribution to the general anti-theatrical sentiment that discourages open discussion), the issues of heightened emotion, hypocrisy and exhibitionism have had serious, and more direct, consequences for the political performer. First, it is worth examining briefly the nature and history of these arguments.

Once we move beyond the ancient philosopher's general distrust of performance as a socially damaging art form, it becomes clear that throughout history, most of the more aggressive anti-theatrical rhetoric originates in the work of various religious movements or organizations. The anti-theatricalism supported by these religious organizations was supposedly inspired by a greater interest in the individual's spiritual life than in the social conditions debated by Plato, though doubtlessly some measure of social control was also a desired outcome. A significant part of Barish's study highlights the assaults on the theatre from religious sects, primarily those asserting to be of Christian faith, who have raised objection to many aspects of the stage, not the least of which, to the engagement in any activity that creates pleasure. The "stirring up" of emotions and the aspect of exhibitionism in performance, the "immorality" of the performer's lifestyle

and the presentation of "immoral works" have all faced condemnation by more fundamentalist Christian organizations. (Barish, 1981, p 22)

As far back as 386 A.D, St. Augustine was interpreting Plato's anti-theatrical writings from a Christian perspective. (Pusey, 1907, Inscription) Julian Hilton writes that as a playwright and an actor, St. Augustine began his life in support of performance, but his later conversion to the Christian faith led him to re-evaluate his beliefs. During this time of self reflection, he came to find these Platonic writings highly attractive. In the name of Christianity, he went even further than Plato had, seeing in theatrical display the manifestation of the devil and the worship of false gods. In the pairing of Augustine and Plato, theatre found two powerful and deeply influential opponents whose influence is still felt today. (Hilton, 1987, p 2)

St. Augustine's turn away from the theatre and his passionate diatribe against it seems to stem from a combination of the aforementioned criticisms. He expressed the particular concern that those watching a "stage-play" were encouraged to enjoy the grief they felt while witnessing the tragedies experienced by the characters onstage. This supposed obsession and pleasure in the pain of others was something that St. Augustine came to disapprove of strongly. Pusey's translation of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, reads as follows,

> "Stage-plays also carried me away, full of images of my miseries, and of fuel to my fire. Why is it that man desires to be made sad, beholding doleful and tragically things, which yet himself would by no means suffer? Yet he desires as a spectator to feel sorrow at them, and this very sorrow is his pleasure...But what sort of compassions is this for feigned and scenical passions? For the auditor is not called on to relieve, but only to grieve: and he applauds the actor of these fictions the more, the more he grieves. And if the calamities

> of those persons (whether of old times or mere fiction) be so acted, that the spectator is not moved to tears, he goes away disgusted and criticizing; but if he be moved to passion he stays intent and weeps for joy."
>
> (St. Augustine in Pusey, 1907, p 33)

The sentiment expresses a heavy combination of several criticisms, but particularly, it seems to convey distaste for the emotions that are brought to the surface in performance. This is not limited to those of the actors, but of the audience as well. Though his later comment that, "...in the theatres I rejoiced with lovers, when they wickedly enjoyed one another, although this was imaginary only in the play" (St. Augustine in Pusey, 1907, p 34) would seem to suggest that play content and the presentation of the false were an equal measure of concern for Augustine. His writing not only implies that the audience is at fault for their interest in observing such actions presented onstage, but that the performers are also wrong to imitate actions that are not, at present, 'real'.

The distinction between what is unperformed and what is represented is a constant point of contention in the anti-theatrical debate, as indeed it has been in political performance. There have been numerous attempts to pinpoint the instances in which performers 'cross the line' into hypocrisy. Some anti-theatrical writers consider all performance to be a form of deceit and therefore, in many cases, sin. They only equate 'authentic' action with spontaneity. (Wikander, 2002, Prologue) The concern with identifying an actor as, by nature, a hypocrite or liar, follows the political performer to this day. Their actions, particularly those that are openly recognised as performance, are constantly scrutinised for hypocrisy with a fervour that suggests an audience who are anxious to find it. In a contemporary world, where the writings of Goffman and many other subsequent theorists have identified performance as a constant and generally non-

threatening aspect of daily communication, it is difficult to understand how this fear of the performer has remained intact. Perhaps the religious vehemence with which it originated has sustained the sentiment through to modern times.

The writings of St. Augustine became a central feature in the doctrine of the fundamentalist reformative Christian sect popularly known as the Puritans, who became prominent in England in the late 16^{th} - 18^{th} century and comprised a large percentage of North American settlers. The notion of exhibitionism, with its trappings of extreme emotion and pleasure were particularly abhorrent to these groups, who believed that hard work and humility were the key to God's graces. They attempted to legislate against "...extravagances or indecencies in clothing and personal adornment" (Ashley, 1966, p 140), and their distaste for such show did not exclude costumes or clothing for entertainers. They also considered acting to be a great perpetration of hypocrisy. They believed that in performing another character onstage one was lying to the audience.

Wikander writes that the notion of the performer as hypocrite was a central topic of the regular moral pamphlets that circulated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, (Wikander, 2002, Prologue) although the Puritans did not restrict their disapproval to that one concept. The Puritans voiced their displeasure with all aspects of the theatre, from the immoral content of the plays, to the immoral lifestyle of the actors, to the very act of generating a heightened emotional state, which some feared may create an addiction. Certainly the fear of 'exhibitionism', or, at least, the vanity that it can involve, remains a fear expressed by those opposed to performance. Even "...legitimate self-manifestation seems to have crossed the border into exhibitionism," (Barish, 1981

p 156) meaning that the conscious presentation of ones own personality can be interpreted as something shameful and possibly hypocritical in certain contexts.

It is not unreasonable to assume that this extreme attitude occurred, at least in part, as a backlash against the ritual theatricality and extreme extravagance of the court of Charles I. The overthrow of the monarchy and the leadership of Puritan Oliver Cromwell made the enactment of Puritan laws possible and the enforcement inevitable. At the height of their power, the Puritans were certain to have prevented any disagreement from being voiced too clearly. The suppression of open debate certainly found a strong hold in this environment.

In an atmosphere so full of disdain for any appearance of artifice or self-consciousness in presentation, it is clear why the politicians of the time would be unwilling to openly explore the more theatrical nature of their careers. Unfortunately, the sentiment pervades even contemporary ideology. Sociologists and historians have noted the significant influence of the Puritan ideology on contemporary western society. Collinson observed that the "Protestant Ethic" established by English and later American Puritans served as a kind of basis for the development of modern society. (Collinson, 1983, p 5) While Wikander acknowledges that the Puritan ideology has pervaded Western history through to contemporary times. (Wikander, 2002, Prologue)

The impact of this extended influence is multi-layered. The Puritan disdain for performance on a variety of levels and the forced influence on social conduct in general offered a double attack on the political performer. Not only is the politician expected to live up to a high standard of personal and religious control, but there can in no way

appear artifice in presentation, or extravagance in performance. In addition, the political performer must develop skills without the benefit of having good theatrical examples to follow. The attempted elimination of the performer restricted the politician's opportunity to regard skilled performance, and as such, the ability to translate those skills into their own work. The finer skills of performance, or any type of public speaking, would have been relatively unknown to many of the later Puritans. Even the infamous 'firebrand' preacher was, in reality, something of a rarity. The Puritan preacher generally "...favoured a certain gravity and the economical use of body language." (Dursten & Eales, 1996, p 47) Impassioned speeches, even on topics of religious significance, were generally forgone in favour of more sedate appeals.

The Puritans also made a point of including within their newspapers and pamphlets, descriptions of incidents of "moral importance..." (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 93) These descriptions were in fact a method of social review, and it can be concluded that those individuals who chose to make too much of a performance during a public gathering would have been 'reviewed' in a chastising manner. Rothenbuhler notes that the element of moral assessment has not entirely been eliminated from US journalism. Supposedly neutral stories often contain a certain amount of moral posturing, whether it is contained implicitly in the tone of the story, or explicitly as expressed by the journalist. (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 93) If this is taken into consideration, then it can be said that the 'personalization' of political information began with the Puritans. Subsequently it is not terribly surprising that a constant interest in moral judgement, in condemning activities rather than debating their foundations and merits, is a constant and damaging feature of political media coverage, in particular in the US.

The intensity of the Puritan influence was also compounded by the evolution of the written word. Prior to their existance, it would have been almost impossible to communicate to a community, either politically or socially, without some regular type of performance. But the rise of the Puritans, particularly throughout the US, coincided with the rise of mass literacy. For the first time, political and social communication could take place on an individual level, without the need for the performed social interactions previously necessary. The Puritans were great proponents of literacy; not surprisingly, since this means of communication inspired quiet and thoughtful reflection and was relatively devoid of the emotional appeals required of oral communication. As the written word came to be the primary means of education and communal thought, those aspects of communication that take place in a visual or oral context subsequently came to be devalued. This emphasis on the superiority of the written word has remained part of western culture and still influences social attitudes towards visual media. Fiske and Hartley write that our society is one in which the written word is still valued as the highest authority. Our interpretations of media and our distrust of the visual image are related to our immersion in the "dominant cultural values" of print-literacy. (Fiske & Hartley, 1988, p 15) As a relatively recent phenomenon, visual media have not yet entirely taken over as our primary means of communicating content.

This is not to say that literary skill should not be valued, only that applying the same demands upon a visual medium condemns it to perpetual inadequacy. Fiske and Hartley observe,

> "Any attempt to decode a television 'text' as if it were a literary text is thus not only doomed to failure but is also likely to result in a negative evaluation of the medium based on its ability to do a job for which it is in fact fundamentally unsuited."
>
> (Fiske and Hartley, 1988, p 15)

It is therefore likely to result in a 'negative evaluation' of those taking part it the experience, including the political performer.

Although the Puritan influence is felt throughout the Western world, it is within the US that the connections are most visible. The work of professional artists still comes under fire from right wing Christian sects for content and form and offstage the lifestyle of performers and other artists is condemned. In the past as well as the present, a direct attack on political performance is rarely necessary. Continued distrust of performance and condemnation of performers in general has generated such an atmosphere of suspicion that performance has become the best kept secret of the political arena.

It is interesting to contrast the influence of the English and US Puritans with the equally vehement French Jansenist movement. Whereas the Puritans established much of their influence through legislation and enforcement, the Jansenists managed to convey their anti-theatrical sentiments at the height of the highly theatrical French court.

The Jansentists shared many of the Puritans views, but were considered far more articulate in their arguments. The Puritans tended to base their arguments in emotional, rather than academic or intellectual sources. (Barish, 1981, p 197) This point is somewhat ironic considering their strong disapproval of any heightened displays of emotion.

Like the Puritan movement, the Jansenist's vehemence arose partly in response to the lavish nature of the French Imperial Court, in which performance was expected from both rulers and their court. Several members and observers of the French court composed manuals, comparable on some level to that of Machiavelli, on the requirements of the courtier. Most included some mention of performance for the means of communication and personal advancement.

In his work entitled *A Treatise of the Court, or Instructions for Courtiers*, Eustache du Refuse describes the French court of the time as "...an eminent and conspicuous theatre, exposed to the sight and eyes of the world." (Barish, 1981, p 178) The writings of Balthasar Graciàn indicate that he, too, considered life in the French court to be necessarily theatrical. He describes the introduction of a new hero as a man who is able to perfect both his "natural" self and his "feigned or artificial person". He has little interest in the careers of actual performers, their low social status would have prevented him from drawing a direct comparison, but he does not hesitate to equate their skill with that of the successful courtier. (Barish, 1981, p 185) He also takes the uncommon step of suggesting that political performance in the context of the court is, in fact, a virtue. He suggests that casting oneself in a public role and having the skill to live up to it is a truly impressive task. It is unfortunate that his sentiments have been given so little subsequent attention.

Both the Jansenists and the Puritans seemed to base their anti-theatricalism in the notion that vice and performance were synonymous, while positive and moral positions could not be performed. (Wickander, 2002, p 197) It is an unusually black and white conclusion, but one that has survived to influence all performance: creatively, socially and politically.

The social status of the professional actor has consistently played a part in influencing society's perceptions of performance in general, and their willingness to address it directly. At the time that Quintillian hired the comic actor to teach classes in oratory, the actor was a revered, if not necessarily well known, citizen. Beginning in the time of the Roman Empire, however, the performer went from revered citizen, with a position in religious and political interaction, to the status of secondary citizen. Laws condemned the immorality of the profession itself and the content it produced. Yet it also prevented the performer from leaving the career into which they had been born. Performers were not allowed to take on the responsibilities of more respectable citizens nor could they hold public office or any other public position. Acting, like slavery, was an inherited position. (Barish, 1981, p 38)

Even superficial interpretations of those laws indicate that they limited the professional actor to the status of second class citizen. As is often the case when a class of people are controlled by legislation, these laws existed not as a means of controlling the 'immorality' of the actor's offstage lifestyle, but out of fear. In this case, fear of the powers of emotional persuasion. Recognizing the enforced separation of the acting class should have hinted at the perceived power these performers controlled. Banning actors from positions of social and political influence was a major proponent in undermining the performance of politicians and instilling the belief that performance, and performers, are something to be feared as well.

The low social status of the performer would have perhaps been the most immediate issue to dissuade the traditionally upper-class leaders from encouraging or pursuing any comparisons between the public aspects of their professions. The social status of the

actor has consistently been a matter of contention throughout history. Hilton writes that the ambiguous social status of the performer has made people wary of association. In many ways, performers are admired and sought after for entertainment. Despite this, they can face social exclusion. (Hilton, 1987, p 2)

In contemporary western society there are no laws to restrict the actions or lifestyle of the professional performer. While certain religious groups may still condemn the lifestyle of the professional actor or the content of a specific piece, they are largely in the minority. For the most part, the more blatant arguments in the anti-theatrical polemic have been dismissed. Yet anti-theatricalism still exists and it is rampant in respect to political performance. The very fact that an accusation of 'theatricality', itself nothing more or less than a means of communication, can outweigh interest or attention to serious political and social issues seems absurd. The growth of mass media, rather than ending this obsession, has only served to increase it and thereby increase the distrust that circulates around the political performer.

Even this brief historical review clearly indicates that our contemporary society is not the first to observe the significance of performance as a communicative tool. Though a trend away from oral presentation in the 18th to early 20th centuries saw an increase in the development of distrust in performance, in our contemporary world the notion of the political performer is, perhaps, more important than ever. Just as the creation of the printing press summoned an era in which the written word defined the process and method of public discourse, television and subsequent innovations in image and instant media have returned us to a society of the visually and orally informed, although the media, and therefore the semiotics of the experience, have changed significantly.

This revolution of image has manifested itself in many different ways. The majority of political communication is expected to take place, if not exclusively than at least in part, in an audio-visual medium. Major political announcements, such as new legislation or precedent-setting court judgements, are expected to be announced not just through a written communication, but also through a televised press conference or public rally. (Postman, 1986, p 76) The goals and mandates established by a political party just prior to an election are not only published, but presented visually, through public 'unveilings' and televised sessions. The main communicator in these and other instances is, of course, the politician. Although a team of supporters may aid in the preparation of these events, it is ultimately the political performer who will be expected to communicate the necessary information. Subsequently, Quintillian's theories of public service education, perhaps considered obsolete for years, are now even more relevant than they were in his own time.

Of course, the contemporary politician has to face several challenges that were absent from Quintillian's world. The medium of television has altered audience expectations and performance standards, as well as accentuating the emphasis and importance of political performance as a means of conveying information. Yet, Quintillian's writings deal with many of the issues that are cause for concern to the contemporary politician.

In light of this it becomes both obvious and increasingly difficult to understand how performance as a political entity has been avoided for so long. Its absence from political communication textbooks and papers would indicate that it is of little interest to the academic observer despite the important role it plays in understanding our political systems. The following will further discuss how performance has managed to remain at

the centre of political communication and yet conspicuously absent from political analysis.

Conclusion

Despite all the years of anti-theatricalism within the performing art of politics and its effects on how we as a society understand political performance, there is an essential truth to Quintillian's belief, perhaps more so now than ever before. In an age of perpetual media, it is an essential skill in a national leader to be able to communicate effectively within the accepted conventions of society. Lamentable though it may be that the time of almost total interest in complex print-oriented thought is gone, it can also be argued that with it have gone prejudices and class restrictions that limited the public accountability of the politician. Now, the politician must communicate every action before the watchful eyes of the media and the audience. The politician has the responsibility of communicating effectively, while the audience has the responsibility of interpreting that performance in a contentious manner. Therefore, one could perhaps add to Quintillian's observations that as well as educating the public leader in the skills of the performer, one should also educate the audience. Continual suspicion of the tactics and motives of the political performer only inhibits honest debate, which is evident in the fact that political performance has been all but overlooked in terms of both performance theory and political communication research. There has been a great void in the study of the actual performance skills of the political leader, even in the media-driven west, and instead, any attention to the increasingly significant communications aspect of leadership has focused on the political strategy, media advisors, and public relations officials who aid the leader in their public presentation.

While it is certainly valid to attach meaning to the actions of those who work around the central political figure, it is also important to view the resulting presentation of that individual for what, in fact, it is: a performance. As such, it has the potential to be deconstructed by academics and audience alike as just that. From the misappropriation of terminology to the avoidance of performance in journalistic and academic circles, it is certainly clear that there is a complex history and relationship that must be sifted through in order to begin to develop an understanding of the process and its effects. It is particularly important that both politicians and the public be able to understand the dramatic needs of leadership, since it is one of the most obviously communication-reliant professions, and one that directly affects us all. The consequences of this realization go beyond a simple comparison of skills and techniques, and extend into our very interpretation and understanding of our own political and cultural reality.

There are indeed political performers who have used their skills to their personal advantage, as well as that of their political mandate, and their government. There are also many examples of those who failed to incorporate performance into their communication strategy and who have suffered political consequences.

But performance itself remains absent from studies of political communication. The result is a combination of avoidance and oversight that has prevented any open study or interpretation of political performance in the contemporary world. It is not only an unfortunate loss to academics in both political science and performance, but the confusion and suspicion surrounding the political performer also has potential effects on the audience's interpretation of political events and personalities.

Chapter 2 - Theory

The Performance Metaphor

Describing an institution or interaction in terms of drama is not a particularly unusual activity. There are several areas of study that use a theatrical or dramatic model to describe actions, environments, or individuals. Theorists in psychology, sociology, history, and art have made use of the terminology and structure of drama as a metaphor. (Barish, 1981, p 66) (Davis & Postlewait, 2003, p 2-3) (Combs, 1980, p 2) Its use, however, is primarily metaphorical. There is generally no in depth analysis or comparison of the performances contained therein.

Political science often uses a theatrical or dramatic metaphor in explanation of large-scale events and activities (Combs, 1980, Introduction). It also uses theatrical terminology to describe individual politicians, although often in a disparaging way. The possibility that the metaphor could be a practical means of understanding the politician is overlooked.

The very public nature of politics, the communication demands that are placed on high level leaders and the rituals or ceremonial aspects of government all demand that performance encompass more than a metaphorical function. The politician has a more intimate association with the performer than such a superficial comparison would allow. In fact, politicians, in some instances, can and should be studied as performers in their own right. To dismiss such a fact is to ignore the potential implications of their

communicative skills, and the audience's interpretation of those skills, on the democratic process.

The following chapter will highlight how the existing attitude toward political performance focuses on metaphorical descriptions, when history has demonstrated that there is reason to approach politics from the perspective of performance theory. This chapter will also explore the linkages between performance theory and political communication in an attempt to identify a potential theoretical framework for the study of the political performer. In the process, I will also develop a non-metaphorical, working definition of the terminology associated with political performance.

Defining Political Performance

One of the greatest challenges to researching any kind of performance is the definition of the very term. It is difficult to pinpoint a single, precise description of the word. It has been used in many different disciplines and in many different contexts. Even within the more specific context of the arts, the use of terms such as 'performance' and 'theatre' are often contentious. Performance theorists have long debated the true definition of the word and as a result there are many different theories as to what 'performance' truly includes. In a political and cultural setting, the term 'performance' can take on any number of meanings. (Davis & Postlewait, 2003, p 2 -3)

For instance, Bealey made a direct comparison between the politician and the performer when he wrote that the actor's 'instincts and skills', of which he included, "...a sense of theatre, a capacity to learn one's lines, a feeling for an audience, and an instinct for timing..." are all of practical use to the politician. (Bealey, 1988, p 243)

In *An Introduction to Political Communication,* McNair did likewise when he made the observation that the politician is a performer, like any other professional communicator. (McNair, 1999, p 37)

But even these assertions resist a serious study of the common skills of the politician and performer. Bealey's statement regarding the "usefulness" of shared skills does not precipitate an examination of how they might be obtained and employed by the politician or interpreted by the audience. Nor does it suggest that the politician actively develop these skills on any conscious level. McNair's identification of the politician as performer effectively ends there. It is a comparison without explanation. His work does not include a study of how this performance skill is to be obtained or subsequently understood.

These comments, indicative of a common line of thought, are accurate in their reference to practical skills, but are also dismissive of those skills in their refusal to go further than simply mention their existence. They are at once an invitation to further discussion of the politician as performer and a continuation of the status quo. In other words, they are using the terminology of the performer as a metaphor for political activity.

However, it is possible to view even this limited discussion as advancement in analysis. In most political writing, phrases such as 'the political performer' or 'the political actor' are generally employed as a means of describing one who is 'active politically' and not as a reference to the performance or communication abilities of the individual. McNair uses the term "political actor" throughout *An Introduction to Political Communication*

to describe, "...those individuals who aspire, through organizational and institutional means, to influence the decision-making process."(McNair, 1999, p 5)

The term 'character' is also one that is used frequently in political discussion. In politics, the perceived strength of one's 'character' is considered a valuable commodity and during campaigns is often referred to as a key component of the leadership potential of the politician in question. (Lewis, 1997, p 158) In actuality, the general voter will have very little opportunity to get the know the true 'character' of the politician, since they will have little to no personal experiences in dealing with him. As Machiavelli observes,

> "Men in general judge by their eyes rather than by their hands; because everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to come in close touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are."
> (Machiavelli, 1961, p101)

Considering this, the political use of the term 'character' holds more similarity to the theatrical meaning of the word than it does to the social definition. That is to say, the term 'character' as it is used in both politics and theatre generally refers to a the presentation of a constructed reality, as opposed to the unconscious communication of an 'authentic' self.

Theorists in performance have also attempted to create a definition that could encompass non-theatre based performances. Throughout the debate there has emerged a line of discourse that attempts to classify performance on a scale, rather than define it within the strict set of rules and boundaries that have developed as the conventions of the Western notion of theatre.

Finnegan states that defining performance is a "relative rather than absolute" undertaking. She observes that the range of possible performance extends from a highly organised and scheduled programme to an impromptu personal interaction (Finnegan, 1992, p 91-2), thus stretching the boundaries of what can be classified as performance.

Davis and Postlewait acknowledge that performance and its theoretical cohort performativity, unlike theatricality, are multidimensional in their application. They can be applied to many kinds of human behaviours, activities and situations, whereas 'acting' and 'theatricality' invoke specific formulas of action and situation. It is even acknowledged that they can be used to interpret "political actions". (Davis and Postlewait, 2003, p 30)

In his essay "On Acting and Non-Acting", Michael Kirby discusses how performance can be present in many different situations and at various levels:

> "Public speaking, whether it is extemporaneous or makes use of a script, may involve emotion, but it does not necessarily involve acting. Yet some speakers, while retaining their own characters and remaining sincere, seem to be acting. At what point does acting appear? At the point at which the emotions are "pushed" for the sake of the spectators. This does not mean that the speakers are false or do not believe what they are saying. It merely means that they are selecting and projecting an element of character - emotion- to an audience."
>
> (Kirby, 1972, p. 3)

Kirby's definition contributes several points of interest to the definition of political performance. First, he recognises that public speaking itself does not necessarily constitute performance, that other elements must be present as well. His understanding of these elements include the 'pushed' or, perhaps, *visible* use of emotion as a communicative tool. Second, he acknowledges that this use of emotion, though for the

purpose of communicating to the audience, does not imply dishonesty. Third, he notes that the public speaker (in this case the politician) develops the public 'face' by highlighting aspects of a 'real' self, and not through entirely creative choices or externally determined factors. Finally, his description suggests that performance can be delineated on the basis of a scale, rather than a concrete and exclusive definition. His writing discusses the possibility that there may be 'levels' of performance, and that public speaking is, in some instances, one of those levels.

Other theorists also explore the concept of the performance level. Schechner developed a model based on the idea of the 'frame', which is defined as the set of rules that govern an interaction, whether implicitly or explicitly communicated. Schechner's model defines performances in terms of their acknowledgement as a framed work; that is to say, the level at which the performance 'team' and the audience are consciously aware that they are upholding the rules of the performance.

'Frame' is a term also used frequently by Goffman. Goffman's definition of performance was broad enough so as to include individual and group interaction. While this extended definition was central to the theory he was attempting to expound, it is impractical to subsequently assume that all forms of performance are, for lack of a clearer term, 'equal' under that same definition. (Goffman, 1959, Conclusion) In this way he attempts to draw distinctions between the professional, or public performer and the everyday performer described by Goffman because the latter, "reflexively masters the techniques of performance", (Schechner & Appel, 1990, p 28) while the former makes a concerted effort to develop the skills and techniques to create a performance.

The politician falls somewhere short of both definitions. They are unlikely to have had the opportunity to fully explore and develop performance skills prior to the experiences in front of the audience; thus, part of their knowledge of performance will be reflexive or instinctive. The politician will learn through experience just as any performer will. On the other hand, the political performance will be far more consciously prepared than that of most individuals in an everyday social interaction. A political performance will likely have been rehearsed or at least discussed in detail with the 'team' prior to its enactment, and a script of some kind will be prepared. These elements indicate that the politician is not simply an unconscious 'everyday' performer, but does not fulfill all the requirements of the professional performer either.

To more clearly observe the levels of performance in general, Schechner developed the following Model of Performance. *(Fig.2.1)*

A) Framed as Performer/Performance (Unaware)	In Between A & B	B) Frame Hidden: Performer knows/Audience does not	In Between B & C	C)Frame Acknowledged by all
Elephant in a circus	*Girl on a date*	*Conmen working a scam*	*Politicians campaigning or orating*	*Professional actors*

In A, the performer is unaware that they are performing although the audience is aware of the frame. In B, the opposite is true and the performer is aware, while the audience is not. This puts the general performance required by social interaction (that form of performance that comprised the basis of much of Goffman's work) in the in-between position of being partially recognised by both audience and performer.

The political performer faces a similarly ambiguous position. By placing the politician between "B and C", Schechner is acknowledging the fact that the politician must take

on the skills of the professional performer in order to communicate adequately to the public and that, to some extent, this level of performance is understood by both the individual and the audience he or she wishes to address. However, it is also evident that the position near the professional actor is qualified by its equal proximity to the more hidden and potentially negative performance skills of the conman.

The theme of duality in discussion of the political performer is recurrent, particularly with the terminology that overlaps between the theatrical world and that of the political leader. There are many terms that cross over between the 'creative' stage and the political world. But words like 'character' and 'actor' have over time acquired too many political and social connotations to be used precisely in the description of the political performer. It is necessary to find within performance theory, terminology that can be used without the connotations of prior associations.

Aside from the social connotations of the word 'character', the definition seems to be limiting to the political performer because it implies a creative fabrication or imitation. It is also used to describe the entire entity visible onstage: the 'character' is embodied by the actor yet exists outside of him. The character is the whole of the information presented to the audience. In the work of the political performer neither of these assertions are correct. It is derived from the individual politician and performed not with the intention of introducing an entirely new creation, but of highlighting and communicating those specific aspects of their personality that are appropriate to a given situation. The political use of the term 'character' also seems to relate only to issues of personality. In the political sense the 'character' of an individual is largely derived from images, whereas in the traditional theatre, the character is based chiefly on the

interpretation of the textual content. In political circles, this projected self is often referred to as the 'image' of a candidate, a term which also has roots in performance theory.

In McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, McGrawth and McBrath state that politically, the 'image' is comprised of "...different traits projected by a candidate to influence voters." Bowes and Strentz remove responsibility from the projector and instead see image as a perceived entity, writing that the audience's understanding of those "perceived attributes" is of greatest significance. Nimmo and Savage describe it as "a human construct imposed on an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event or person."(McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1997, p 27) Performance theorist David Cole considers the term 'image' a more inclusive term, encompassing traditional ideas of 'character' and 'role', as well as more interpretive concepts of any projected identity, such as 'persona' or the performer in a non-narrative physical theatre or dance piece.

Cole writes that in seeking to project an image, one must look primarily at oneself: "In searching for the life of a role, it is one's own life one searches." (Cole, 1975, p 16) This is an apt description of the work of the political performer, and yet, when applied politically the term tends to lose connection with performance and instead becomes confused with implications of advertising and public relations, two disciplines that also use the word to describe overall perception of a product.

Therefore, despite the popularity of this term among political writers, it is perhaps not the clearest means of communicating the idea of the political 'character', since it is so tainted by other connotations. In performance theory, the term 'image' is less often used than the term 'persona' to describe a non-traditional character. I consider this to be the

best term to describe the nature of the political 'character' in performance. In Latin, the term "persona" signifies the "outward appearance", thus distinguishing the projected self from the "natural person". (Pye, 1990, p 49) The separation of the performed or communicated self and the "everyday" self is a distinction important in defining the politician as a performer. Yet, persona does not carry with it connotations of superficiality or deceit that 'image' has come to include. It is a somewhat more neutral term because it has not yet been misappropriated, to any great extent, by political commentators.

The term 'persona' has been used and developed by several performance artists and theorists, including Rachel Rosenthal, who defines 'persona' in the following way:

> "In acting or playing a character you want to impersonate the personality of a person that is not yourself. A persona, however, is an artefact, a fabrication that corresponds to what you want to project from yourself, from within. It is like taking a facet, a fragment and using that as a seed to elaborate on. It is you and yet not you - a part of you but not the whole. It is not a lie but neither is it the whole truth."
>
> (Lampe in Zarrilli 1995: 297)

In developing this "public face" the politician must also use that "facet" of his or her personality that is appropriate to the situation. He or she is not developing a character "from scratch", but instead using the 'un-performed' self as a basis for communicating with the audience.

It is interesting to note that some of the frequent applications of the term 'persona' occur in reference to the on-stage work of the contemporary stand-up comedian. Schechner describes the work of the stand-up comic as a careful balance between the

"authentic self" and the "performed self". He equates the comic's act to the work of a body builder in that they both enhance, or overdevelop, certain aspects of themselves for public display. (Schechner, 1988, p 50)

The comparison with the muscle man is appropriate to the political performer as well. As Rosenthal noted in the description quoted above, persona is a presentation, or elaboration of specific elements of reality. Just as the muscleman focuses on a specific area of their body, the political performer (and the stand up comedian) focus on certain aspects of their personalities that are appropriate to convey in their performance settings.

Acting coach Tony Barr notes that

> "...you must bring to the role those parts of yourself that are congruent...you work from yourself at all times, not from some imagined person whose skin you struggle to squeeze into. Don't force the character on yourself; find the character in yourself...you will have shelved those parts of you that are wrong for the role and will use only those parts that are right."
>
> (Barr, 1997, p 28)

For the actor, Barr believes that this generates a uniqueness and a sympathy that makes the resulting performance more interesting. For the political performer it allows the opportunity to communicate the desired elements of a personality with honesty and skill. The political persona is not a falsification, but a selective presentation of those elements of the individual that are of importance to the audience.

Rosenthal's work also attempts to distinguish a subtle but important distinction between 'acting' and 'performing'; terms that are often used interchangeably. She effectively

extracts the perceived meaning of the terms 'acting' and 'character' from 'performance', making it clear that 'performing' and 'acting' are distinct activities. She is quoted as saying,

> " 'Performing' encompasses more modes of social and aesthetic behaviour than 'acting' ever could. 'Acting' and 'character' are linked to the Western notion of 'narrative' and all three together are major building blocks of the apparatus of Western theatrical representation... In contrast, 'performing' and 'persona' distrust the working of conventional Western narrative and ...allow for the co logical expression of selves."
>
> (Lampe in Zarrilli, 1995, p 297)

Much like Goffman's definition of performance, Rosenthal's approach is inclusive so as to allow for the interpretation of performance in non-traditional situations. This 'distrust' of the traditional Western interpretation of performance leaves room for the public performance of the politician to be understood as "performance" in a theoretical and practical sense.

This encompassing definition is used by several other theorists and working performance collectives. Joseph Roach makes the following distinction between theatre and performance,

> "...theater, like theory, is a limiting term for a certain kind of spectator participation in a certain kind of event. Performance, by contrast, though it frequently makes reference to theatricality as the most fecund metaphor for the social dimensions of cultural production, embraces a much wider range of human behaviours."
>
> (Roach in Davis & Postlewait, 2003, p 31)

The work of the Wooster Group is also centred on the notion of the 'persona' as opposed to the 'character'. They reject the idea of traditional 'acting' in favour of the less traditional "performance". The Wooster Group relies on a process of project development based on personal experience and emotion. They, too, use the term 'persona' to describe their presented selves. This type of production obviously deviates from the traditional western narrative theatrical form and allows the audience to see beyond the scripted 'character' and into the emotions of the actor. (Auslander in Zarrilli, 1995, p 306)

In the International Encyclopaedia of Communication, Bauman describes "performance" as "an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience." (Bauman, 1989, p 262) Similarly, Finnegan writes that a communication can be defined as "performance" by its "heightened and framed quality." (Finnegan, 1992, p 91) That is, what is expected of the politician when communicating with the audience. The existence of a persona, while an important step in communicating to the audience, is only part of a complete picture. Without the performance of that persona, the acceptance and understanding of the audience is limited.

What can be concluded from this analysis? It is clear that the terminology of communication, as a whole, and performance specifically is both contentious and vague. However, it is also necessary to specify meaning so as to prevent further confusion within this text. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the following definitions will apply:

The term 'theatrical' has been used in the context of political communication to denote everything from a 'staged' to an 'ideal' communication. For our purposes, the term 'theatrical' and 'theatricality' will be used to describe the context and circumstance of certain performance texts, specifically those that operate within more traditional western notions of theatre. "Performativity" is a more unifying term, and will be used to describe the broader behaviours and actions of the communicators.

Those who are the recipients of the political performance will be referred to as the 'audience'. This term is more participatory than 'spectator', and yet retains the connection with performance. As we will explore, there are several conceptualisations of this term, however, for our purposes, this is its clearest use.

The term 'persona' will be used to describe the total verbal and nonverbal presentation that is interpreted and assigned meaning by an audience.

Throughout the literature on both performance and political communication, terms such as 'authentic', 'sincere' and 'true' are used as an alternative to the performed self. It is my contention that the performed self, particularly in the context of the political communicator, is no more or less 'authentic' than any presentation of self; that there cannot be a clear dichotomy between person and persona. Yet, the existence of the persona indicates that there must be an alternate representation, a baseline source, for this heightened presentation. In the context of writings by Goffman, and Davis and Postlewait, who indicate that all human interactions are based upon performance, it is difficult to separate the political performer into two single categories. However, as the purpose of this thesis is to examine the politician as performer in the context of political

communication, I will limit my study of that communication to the communicated 'persona' and the 'un-performed' self. The 'un-performed' self will indicate the political performer outside the context of a heightened political communication. The term 'sincere' may be used in reference to other writings, or to discuss the personal motivations of the performer. Likewise, 'authentic' may be used in reference to existing literature.

'Political performance' refers to any communication, imparted by the politician, whether intentional or not, that is interpreted by the audience as having political meaning. The political performer is one who imparts this communication, and is ultimately held responsible for its interpretation.

The term 'ritualised performance' will distinguish between the heightened communication that occurs through more overtly theatrical presentations and the standard political performance that is conducted through every day interactions with an audience.

The term 'actor' will be used to describe the professional performer in a theatrical context, that is, the political performer's theatrical counterpart.

Other terms, with more direct theatrical meaning, will also appear occasionally throughout as comparisons between the performances of the actor and those of the political performer are explored. A well-organised and smooth running political rally or photo opportunity may be considered a 'stage-managed' event. Objects used for emphasis during a political presentation or speech are called 'props'. And environments

organised for the support of a specific performance are often called 'sets' or 'stages'. While these terms may be used by some political writers and theorists to support a generally negative theatrical metaphor, here their use is to highlight the practical and theoretical similarities that exist between these two performance environments. These terms may appear throughout this work to maintain the identity and context of the politician as performer.

The Sociological "Performance"

As previously noted, sociologists, like political scientists and practitioners, generally restrict their analysis of performance to a metaphorical level. Some texts, like *The Handbook of Communication Skills,* will go so far as to say that ..."social behaviour is a form of skilled performance."(Hargie, 1997, p 1) Like the political commentators discussed previously, the majority of these sociologists do not examine in any detail the nature of the performance itself.

It was sociologist Erving Goffman who initiated a shift in this kind of thinking. His groundbreaking study entitled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* (Goffman, 1959) and subsequent works acknowledge the significance of real performance skills in interaction outside the artistic or professional world of film and theatre and helped to advance the study of performance in daily life to a level beyond the theoretical.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* Goffman began an exploration of the nature of performance skills in day-to-day interaction. Although he does not deal directly with the performances of the politician, many of his insights into the more universal

applications of the performance framework can easily be applied on a larger scale to that profession.

In his introduction he describes the focus and goals of his study as being primarily concerned with the practical skills that all individuals use to develop and maintain their public 'character'. He acknowledges that this 'character' will most likely change between social groups and situations and that different skills may be needed to adapt to the constant shifts in an individual's social environment. It is his theory that the "issues dealt with by stagecraft and stage management...seem to occur everywhere in social life..."(Goffman, 1959, p 15) and that they should be given particular attention. This theory is particularly compatible with the study of the political performer, as it subjects non-professional performers to the scrutiny of performance theory. It also initiates discussion and serves as a basis for many of the significant points to be covered in this dissertation, including the development of a separate public 'character', the importance of the "cast and crew" in social interaction, and the analysis of performance in relation to the audience. In each of these instances, Goffman uses a model of performance as a basis for the analysis of social interaction, and not as a metaphor or description.

One of the most significant assertions of Goffman's work is that the skills employed in day-to-day human interaction are, in fact, a practical means of performance. In addition, he does not attempt to qualify this statement by suggesting that this fact is negative. Much like a director, carefully assessing the impact of his actors' performances, Goffman studies the skill and success of his subject's performances and applies theatrical standards in the assessment of self-presentational skill. The connection and compatibility of the disciplines may seem somewhat obvious, but it was, at that time, a

relatively unique method of academic research and possibly one that heralded a growing interest in the skills of public communication in general.

Perhaps one of the keys to Goffman's process rests in the fact that he apparently understood the natural connection between performance and more standard human interactions. In his introduction he refers to the works of Robert Erza Park, quoting the following:

> "It is probably no mere historical accident that the word 'person', in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role...It is in these roles that we know each other, it is in these roles that we know ourselves."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 19)

Goffman's own definition of performance is similarly all encompassing, as, "...all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants." (Goffman, 1959, p 15) He thus leaves the field open to many different kinds of performance analysis, not restricting it to the study of those working in more traditional performance roles, on stage or screen.

These assertions alone provide a good starting point to the study of performance in politics. If Goffman's definition is to be taken at face value, then it is an unquestionable fact that the politician would be classed as a performer as they must constantly, almost by definition, undertake activity with the purpose of influencing others. But the relevance of his work goes much further than definitions. From the beginning, Goffman sets out to explore issues that are of interest to the political performer and in the process sets out a guideline for performance studies particular to that career. In his analysis of

every day interactions, Goffman touches upon many of the issues that are significant to any study of a political communicator, many of which have been touched on by other authors and commentators since. Goffman was interested not only in the skills that an individual used in presenting oneself to others, but in the various behaviours that indicate a performance, or in other words, a separation between audience and performer. This line between the performer and the audience, and the performance and the un-performed individual is one of the most contentious aspects in the rejection of political performance, and therefore a very relevant aspect of Goffman's contribution.

Within Goffman's definition, the individual can only really be said to be performing if their "offstage" behaviour differs from what is presented to the audience. Goffman was interested in how this was made evident, and thus paid particular attention to the analysis of the "team" or "cast" work that is involved in any performance, since it is often in the "backstage" interaction and dialogue between cast members that the other side of the performer emerges.

Goffman concluded that the individual performer was generally taking part in a larger group performance, involving the mutual assistance of other individuals. (Goffman, 1959, p 77) Goffman refers to this type of group as the performance "team", and describes the team-mate as "...someone whose dramaturgical co-operation one is dependent upon in fostering a given definition of the situation..."(Goffman, 1959, p 84) He notes, however, that although this generally includes an informal agreement to keep "backstage" information away from the audience, a team-mate who "...insists on giving the show away or forcing it to take a particular turn"(Goffman, 1959, p 84) is no less a part of the whole production. The fact that the individual has the knowledge and ability

to draw attention to the differences between the performance and the audience only serves to highlight the importance of his role within the team.

Politically, this theory can be seen in practice in the fact that in a political organization, especially a campaign team, government or party, the higher within the hierarchal structure a dissenting member is, the more damage can be done to the overall team. Hence the fact that the status of the "whistleblower" in political scandals is often an issue of great importance: those scandals based on information from a high-ranking official are generally given more serious attention than those accusations from lower in the ranks.[1] Likewise, scandals involving those high within the structure of government are considered far more serious and subsequently more worthy of media attention than those of lower ranking individuals. Those who wish to discredit a political organization or in some way tarnish their projected image are, in most instances, more likely to attract attention to their claims if they can attribute them to a high level participant. Both Rodham Clinton and Stephanopoulos describe instances in which more senior members of the Clinton administration (including the Clintons themselves) were targeted as participants in scandal largely for their visible status within the government. Less senior members of the administration may have had more direct involvement in the scandals, but their inclusion was of less significance because of their position within the team. (Stephanopoulos, 1999, p 290) (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 194)

Goffman noted that team-members could be identified by the "staging talk" or "backstage activity" that is restricted from the public. The shift in actions and language between the 'staging' area and the private area is an acknowledgement of the limited information and controlled image that they are interested in projecting to the outside

world. The alteration of behaviour is a means of establishing the team and excluding the audience, even during the performance, and through this the team develops an intimacy and "solidarity" that extends even into the staging area. (Goffman, 1959, p 177)

When applied to political performance, this theory highlights the separateness and "cast" feeling of the political "team" that surround an individual candidate, particularly in terms of a campaign staff. At any point, a candidate for leadership of a national party or organization will be surrounded by assistants, publicity consultants, speech writers, party officials, policy advisors, and a host of other staff and support. (Lewis, 1997, p 89) Within the team there may be varied and extreme disagreement, while in public, however, they generally appear as a united front, as it is often in their own best interest and that of their specific candidate.

This type of sustained group performance is also the basis of most professional theatrical work. The cast and crew of most traditional western theatre or film productions work to maintain the illusions put forth on the stage, and for the duration of any performance, put aside any division and present a unified front. The crew, though not always an aspect of theatrical production visible to the audience, are as integral to the maintenance of the overall group act as are any of the visible cast members. The very attempt to remain invisible, or at least make their presence as discreet as possible, is a testament to the fact that they are an important part of the presentation. Their work is best carried out with little direct attention to their efforts. They often wear black or dark clothing, so as to blend into the dim lighting in the wings, and they tend to work from positions that keep them hidden from view, so as not to disturb the suspension of disbelief within the piece. The crew of a film, television or theatrical production are

essentially in control of how well those in the public eye, the cast, are able to present the desired image. Once the cast begins performing, the support work is out of their control. It falls to the crew to make sure that things continue to go as planned.

As much can be said for those members of the campaign team who occupy preparational or 'stage management' roles. Their responsibilities in ensuring the best possible advantage for their candidate place them in the same position as the stage manager, who is responsible for creating the best possible presentation of the theatrical or film production. It is important to note that, in effect, a political campaign team is a reflection of just such a theatrical team and in both instances detailed stage management is essential in order to create a successful performance. Those who set up and promote public appearances, who design the stage settings and lighting and who prepare for the political performances hold a lot of power over how the audience will react to that appearance. A significant difference, however, is that while the theatrical team is generally experienced and trained in the appropriate skills, the political team is often comprised of individuals with various political or managerial backgrounds, rarely those who might have experience in presenting a performer to an audience. Often, they have no training in any of the other technical requirements of a performance, such as staging or set design, and they must learn, as the politician does, through trial and error. Though management skills and public relations may be fields in which the political stage manager has some experience, the semiotics of the performance space, the possible implications of light design and wardrobe and many other factors that can affect a performance will often go unnoticed, to the potential detriment of the performance. Therefore the team, as in traditional performance, is in support of the performer.

However, politically they are challenged, not only by the standard theatrical limitations, but also by a host of other issues that will be explored throughout the rest of this thesis.

Of course, the presence of the team is but one aspect in defining the individual as a performer. The awareness of the audience is also a key element in performance. Goffman writes that, "the audience, too, will be presenting a team performance" (Goffman,1959, p 92) and that their actions towards the team and the individual performer help define that performer as separate or "other". The audience will "voluntarily stay away from regions into which they have not been invited." (Goffman, 1959, p 228) In other words, they will maintain the sanctity of the performance space; isolating it, and the performers who utilise it, as distinct from themselves. Thus they contribute to the segregation of the "team" and the opportunity for that team to present a polished performance.

This segregation and isolation of the performance space demands that the audience perform their own roles appropriately. In the same way that a theatrical audience is at once constrained and empowered by its position, so too is the non-theatrical audience guided by unspoken rules of decorum. On the one hand, both have the power to express approval or disapproval, however, their means of doing so are limited by socially accepted rules of behaviour. They may, in any given instance, be able to applaud, shout, display signage (or other symbolic material) or, in some instances, have a more direct, if controlled, response through polling or voting. The social constraints, or rules, that govern how the audience may communicate its opinion are, in their recognition and implementation, an acknowledgement of the fact that the political team is an entity

separate from the audience, and that the politician is a performer and will be treated as such.

By highlighting the significance of studying the actions and codes of those surrounding the central performer, Goffman identifies a more holistic approach to performance that is entirely applicable to the politician. As Ruth Finnegan writes, "Though often starting with performers...the investigation must also embrace those other participants whose roles supplement or overlap with those of the apparent leader." (Finnegan, 1992, p 94-5) Goffman's research approaches performance from just that perspective.

But of all the important points that Goffman's work offers, his greatest contribution is actually his most obvious. Goffman's work is an extremely important beginning to the study of performance in politics because of its recognition of performance outside the conventional, theatrical definition of the term. His greatest breakthrough was not in developing an entirely new way of viewing his subject, but in combining two familiar aspects of communication to create a practical dramaturgical perspective on social interaction. I will return to his works throughout this essay, but for the present I would like to note the work of another sociologist, Arlie Hochschild, in advancing Goffman's theories.

Hochschild applied Goffman's dramaturgical perspective to her study of public interaction in the workplace. Her work is also very valuable in considering its applications to the political sector, as it takes Goffman's observations a step further by considering their implications specifically in a working environment. She also raises important points regarding the possibility that performance in human interaction,

despite its frequent denouncement, is in fact demanded socially and often professionally.

Hoschschild's research, as compiled in the text *The Managed Heart*, effectively pinpoints the nature of performance in the workforce through her specific example of the commercial airline business. One of her most relevant contributions, in terms of political performance, is her exploration of what she terms "emotional labour". Emotional labour is defined by Hochschild as,

> "...the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display...this labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others..."
>
> (Hochschild, 1983, p 7)

This work is the kind that is expected of the professional actor as a matter of course, but often ignored or avoided in relation to any other profession, despite being a social necessity and, as we shall note, a significant aspect of political success.

Unlike many of her fellow sociologists, Hochschild openly recognises that "acting is the needed art and emotion work is the tool"(Hochschild, 1983, p 167) in terms of success within the public sphere. This statement would appear to reflect a recognition that the skills of the performer are needed to interact with the public on a very basic level, even without considering the various implications and complications involved in communication with a large group or via media. Hochschild recognises the importance of this emotion work and its relevance to the perceptions of the audience; not simply their perception of the individual, but of the institution or issues the individual may represent.

One of Hoschschild's most interesting and keenly relevant observations is that in the airline business the pleasant demeanour, confidence, and attitude of the cabin crew are expected to symbolise the nature of the company as a whole. The positive individual performances are meant to remind the customer that the airline is safe, secure, conscientious and intensely interested in the happiness of their clientele. (Hochschild, 1983, p 4)

For a government leader, the implications of this observation are profound. The outward expression of ease and confidence that a leader is expected to maintain can also be interpreted as a symbol of confidence in the affairs of their government and respective country. If the national political leader allowed the many anxieties and confusions that must accompany such a position to reflect in their public expression (as recorded, transmitted and commented constantly upon by the media), then they would undoubtedly generate concern, both about the individual's mental and physical health and the state of the country's affairs. As Bealey observes, "The ordeal of public accountability could be enough to drive the average citizen to tears."(Bealey, 1988, p 231) Yet the political use of emotional labour demands that they maintain the appearance of confidence and strength.

When observed from this perspective, the performance of the political leader begins to take on an added level of significance. Not only must the individual use performance skills to gain and maintain personal popularity, but must employ those same skills as a means of assuring the audience that the show being played out before them is truly under control. The politician's outward display must reassure the audience that their perceived reality is as it should be. In the case of both the flight attendant and the

political leader, the repercussions of the performance have extensive personal, economic and social possibilities. In both cases there is an audience carefully observing and qualifying their performance on an individual and a larger, more symbolic level. The audience is expecting a persona that they feel comfortable with, a symbol of confidence and security at the same time. Both the politician and the flight attendant run the risk of being removed from their position if they prove unable to deliver the appropriate emotional responses. For their respective institutions any unhappiness or concern perceived on the part of the audience translates itself into a negative response.

Following the Canadian BSE crisis of 2003 then Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, staged a press conference during which he ate a portion of what was said to be Canadian produced beef. Prime Minister Chrétien gave his audiences the 'thumbs up' signal as he prepared to take another bite of the steak. His expression is one of happiness and confidence, despite the fact that being photographed by several dozen photographers while dining is not an experience that would naturally inspire such a response. His performance is clearly intended to both indicate and encourage confidence in the product. His emotional labour was required to symbolise safety and security. (Batcho, 2003, p 22)

Hochschild does not suggest that any job in which communication is required is necessarily 'emotional labour'. She highlights several key points that may identify such a position:

1) They require direct communication with a public, or what Hochschild refers to as "face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact."
2) They demand that the individual generate an emotional response from their audience, whether it is fear, anger, pride, etc.

3) They give the employer the opportunity, to some degree, to control the "emotional activities" of the individual. This is often achieved through training and supervision.

(Hochschild ,1983, p 147)

In the case of the political leader, the primary employer is the voting public, or audience, who, via polling response, election voting and media commentary, exert tremendous influence over the emotional labour of the individual and demand high and precise emotional conduct.[2] The politician's position as an emotional labourer differs from Hochschild's description, however, in that those employers do not give them any official behavioural or performance training prior to their election. An elected official may have the aid of press secretaries, civil servants and media consultants once they enter into office, and they may be given some instruction on the appropriate *content* with which to respond to media. But they are not given any specific training in the areas of emotional output, or performance. They are, however, expected to deliver flawless performances all the same.

Flight attendants, sales representatives, medical practitioners, judges and other professionals are all coached, to some degree, on how to communicate to their customer or clientele. (Hochschild, 1983, p 147) The politician is expected to be naturally skilled at performance and public interaction and yet often possessing of a background that would have little relevant experience in such emotional control and communication.

There are, of course, exceptions. Lawyers and social leaders may have had an opportunity to develop performance skills in their work before entering politics, though few would have studied it to any great degree. There are instances of professional actors taking on leadership roles. The most notable being Ronald Reagan, who became

President of the United States. However, these instances, despite the media coverage they receive, are in fact relatively few.

Though Hochschild takes tremendous steps toward clarifying the various levels of performance within the public workplace, it remains an area of contention with plenty of opportunity for confusion. While the public performance used by politicians and other 'emotional labourers' cannot be classified as exactly the same as the work of the actor, it also cannot be dismissed as an entity entirely separate from performance. As a result, the audience is left in a kind of structural limbo. They cannot interpret the politician's performance in the same way that they would a drama, but they must apply some of the same criteria to the political performer as they would the actor. This absence of clear understanding of the role performance plays in political life can have an effect on both the audience and on the politician. Both are left without any clear framework for deconstructing the communication between them.

Subsequently, the audience/electorate comes to have almost impossible expectations of the performance style and ability of its leadership, and the leaders are forced to compete not only with each other but with professional entertainers for communication time and interest from the population. They must regularly deal with accusations from the media about their 'sincerity' when there is any perceived acknowledgement of the performance.

The work of Goffman, and, later, Hochschild, provide a general basis for the analysis of the political performer. Their work has influenced other sociologists to examine the theatrical model as well. Although, unfortunately, few have done so in such a way as to

go beyond the metaphorical. In *Self-Presentation: Impression Management and Interpersonal Behaviour*, Leary describes the performance framework as exclusively metaphorical. (Leary, 1996, p 10) In *The Dimensions of Political Drama*, Combs begins by making it clear to the reader that it is not his intention to develop the theatrical framework as a "full-fledged new theory" but more as a useful means of describing specific political events. (Combs, 1980, p 2)

Combs is correct in noting that the large-scale political systems of the contemporary world easily lend themselves to a dramatic or theatrical analogy. The high stakes interactions of governments and powerful individuals inspire references to the 'dramatic' or 'tragic' in a metaphorical sense. While the theatrical model may be a useful tool in the analysis and discussion of many areas, including politics, there is a concept of the political performer that goes beyond the metaphorical and into the practical reality. On a very real level, the national-level politician can be a true performing artist and, consequently, the working environment can include as many elements of the non-political performance as budget and time will allow.

Although sociology has made great strides in the study of non-theatre based performance, an understanding of the complexity of the political performer remains elusive. There are important differences between the average emotional labourer and the politician. Though close to the public 'character' and the "emotional labourer" they also share more traditional aspects of performance with the professional actor. They are required to participate in more overtly theatrical modes of performance. In order to do so, they are required to make extensive and varied use of media, an aspect of communication that requires its own particular skills and analysis. While the basic

principles of stage acting were enough for the Goffman and Hochschild studies, a careful analysis of political performance requires a more in depth look at the existing performance theory, and the potential position politicians may hold within it.

Performance Theory and the Politician

The concept of the performance frame or scale is re-examined by Geraldine Harris as reality "quotation marks". She writes that theatrical performance is traditionally expected to quote the "reality effects" that they perform, while simultaneously altering those effects. The very fact that theatrical performance highlights those elements of interaction which social life tends to hide makes it distinct. (Harris, 1999, p 186)

Although perhaps not consciously considering the performance scale, political theorists have continually addressed the nature of this dual position. The hesitancy of the political world to truly address the issues of performance in politics stems, in part, from this fear of association with a manipulative or dishonest alter ego. This apparent contradiction in attitude is a clear indication of the paradox of the politician's performance responsibility. Though it is generally acknowledged by both parties that the politician is performing in order to communicate, that performance is not always seen as a means of communication but often as an attempt at concealment.

This unusual necessity of balancing between acknowledged performance and subtle manipulation places the politician in a difficult position both theoretically and practically. It is important to acknowledge the various causes and repercussions of the duality of the position in order to find a better understanding of its unique place in performance theory.

As discussed previously, the Wooster Group performance company examine the notion of 'sincerity' in performance through their unique approach to theatrical presentation. By eliminating the artifice of 'believability' demanded by theatrical realism, the performers are free to show the emotions that they experience while immersed in the process of performing. Rather than impersonate the emotions of the 'characters' in the script, they incorporate themselves into the piece and the context of the chosen play is reshaped and re-examined through the emotions of the actors experiencing the performance. As the audience becomes aware of the process, they come to have a greater understanding of both the performers' work and the context of the piece. Rather than eliminate emotion or 'sincerity' through performance, this type of personal text heightens emotional reality.

The issue of 'believability' addressed by the Wooster Group is one that is recurrent in western performance theory. It has been concluded that in the west we similarly expect both our professional performers and our political leaders to "act but not put on an act" to "transform rather than perform". (Tuan in Schechner & Appel, 1990, p 242) Just as Goffman raises questions about the perceived 'sincerity' in an everyday performance, the Wooster Group question the traditional western notion of 'believability' in performance. Their work is an exercise in understanding how the self and the 'character' can be presented together effectively in performance. Certainly this is an area of concern for the political performer, since their perceived 'sincerity' is often linked to their skills as a performer.

When the politician presents himself to the audience, it is an attempt to highlight the portions of the existent personality that are most appropriate to that audience and situation. Those parts may change significantly between various performances (and various audiences) but they are self-referential. The politician's ability to control and put forward the appropriate aspects of personality or persona is a creation of character. This approach to performance, though taken to new heights by Rosenthal and The Wooster Group, has roots in some of the most fundamental literature on performance.

In Stanislavski's much revered *Building a Character*, he says,

> "Each person evolves an external characterization out of himself, from others, takes it from real or imaginary life according to his institution, his observation of himself and others. He draws it from his own experience of life or that of his friends...The only proviso is that while he is making this external research he must not lose his inner self."
>
> (Stanislavski, 1950, p 4)

The thought of losing oneself in the search for a persona is akin to the fear that the performer might assume those qualities they attempt to portray onstage. But there is an added dimension for the contemporary political performer. In the absence of understanding and skill in performance, the politician can be consumed by the attributed information and constructed image developed on their behalf by advertising experts and political associates. As Lewis observes in *Trail Fever,* for the politician, the persona can occasionally overtake the real individual. "Bob Dole isn't running for President. The *concept* of Bob Dole is running...That is why he is referring to himself in the third person. He isn't there, at least not in any meaningful sense. " (Lewis, 1997, p 89)

As Hochschild points out in her description of emotional labour, the individual who is in a position of dealing with the public may not be a performer by choice but by necessity. For the flight attendant of her study, it is occasionally possible to "go through the motions" expected of them and not truly perform the persona that has been developed by their company. For the politician, it is perhaps tempting to place the development and communication of the persona into the hands of consultants and team members, allowing their work to comprise the whole of the projected image. Such a choice displays a lack of understanding of the importance of 1) true self in the development of the persona, and 2) performance in communication. The politician who does not actively participate in performing his or her identity will not be successful in communicating to the audience.

The extent to which the politician actively engages in that performance can be further examined through the performance scales outlined by Schechner. However, while the scales of performance provide a context in which to view the political persona, they do not identify the specific ways in which the political performer fits into that context. For that, it is helpful to draw comparisons with more detailed descriptions of performance such as those outlined by Schechner and Appel as "universals of performance". (Schechner & Appel 1990: 4-6) The six points provide a more specific theoretical field of reference.

Transformation - this is inclusive of both the physiological and psychological changes in the performer, as well as subsequent changes in the audience.

Intensity - the creation of emotional levels within the audience and the performer

Audience - the relationship between the performance and those at whom it is directed.

Sequence - the pattern or order of the performance

Transmission of Performance Knowledge - the communication of information between performers regarding the performance and the skills it requires

Evaluation - the response of the audience directed for the benefit of other audience members or those participating in the performance

Political performance can be said to encompass those "universals" in the following way:

Transformation - the politician's goal in a performance is to transform the attitudes of the audience into agreement or support of his or her own interests

Intensity - in order to attract the audience and win their support, the politician must generate an appropriate level of intensity, depending upon the circumstances

Audience - the audience for the politician is generally comprised of members of his or her constituency, though occasionally public performances are also directed at fellow politicians and other public figures

Sequence - the political performance has a variety of structures, depending upon the situation and the media involved. However, there is generally an agreed-upon structure to the performance prior to its commencement

Transmission of Performance Knowledge - the open discussion of performance techniques is one area in which political performance is consistently lacking. However, there is usually an acknowledgement between performers of the structure and style of the performance

Evaluation - political performances are regularly evaluated by media observers and political scientists. There is also a general informal evaluation that often takes place within the audience

Schechner also highlights several variables that link traditional theatre to more peripheral forms of performance in the Performance Chart *(Fig. 2.2)*:

	Play	*Games*	*Sports*	*Theatre*	*Ritual*
Special ordering of time	Usually	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special value for objects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-productive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rules	Inner	Frame	Frame	Frame	Outer
Special Place	No	Often	Yes	Yes	Usually
Appeal to Others	No	Often	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audience	Not necessarily	Not necessarily	Usually	Yes	Usually
Self-assertive	Yes	Not totally	Not totally	Not totally	No
Self-transcendent	No	Not totally	Not totally	Not totally	Yes
Completed	Not necessarily	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Performed by group	Not necessarily	Usually	Usually	Yes	Usually
Symbolic reality	Often	No	No	Yes	Often
Scripted	Sometimes/No	No	No	Yes	Usually

To which I would add the separate field of political performance:

	Political Performance	*Details*
Special ordering of time	Usually	Particularly during debates and parliamentary or congressional sittings, time is often structured for a specific event
Special value for objects	Usually	Objects involved in political appearances are often invested with symbolic value, such as ornamental seals, residences or offices
Non-productive	Occasionally	An individual performance may not be aimed at achieving a specific goal, but instead creating a foundation for future use. Also, ceremonial events occasionally fulfill a simulatenous practical function

Rules	Usually	This can refer to both the rules of debate or the unspoken limitations on conduct observed by audience and performers
Special place	Usually	Even in informal appearances, a special designated area is often assigned. On a larger scale, official spaces and buildings form a permanent set and fully staged events often occur.
Appeal to others	Yes	Political performance attracts attention and the support of other people. Whether or not policies and opinions are agreed upon, it is generally accepted that a good political performance should appeal to the audience anyway.
Audience	Yes	The skilled political performer recognizes that there is always an audience and therefore every public appearance becomes a political performance.
Self-Assertive	Usually	The general purpose for political performance is the creation of support for the individual, either as a candidate or as an incumbent seeking support to forward a political agenda. Though "team" work is often involved, the actual performance is self-assertive.
Self-Transcendent	Occasionally	When an individual speaks solely for the party or government they represent, they can be seen as self-transcendent.
Completed	Not necessarily	Although the specific performance may come to a clear conclusion, the political performer is expected to uphold the persona throughout their career, therefore the performance does not have a clear ending.
Performed by group	Usually	The performance "team" is involved in many aspects of the performance
Symbolic Reality	Occasionally	Incumbent leaders are surrounded by the symbolism of the institution they embody. They are also often required to participate in symbolic or ritual activities.
Scripted	Usually	The political performance is almost always subject to some incarnation of script.

Once again, political performance would appear to be in an in-between position, this time placed somewhere between the theatre and ritual performances. However, in this instance the association is not, at least by definition, negative. In fact, ritual plays a significant part in political performance. Aside from the skills needed to communicate on a personal level, in the eyes of the audience the politician must also embody the institution of government. Actions within that office therefore assume a certain ritualised performance quality, with the politician as the central figure. In this way, we can identify two distinct, though interconnected, forms of political performance: the

persona based exercise of communicating emotion and information, and the more ritualised performance of the traditional leadership role.

Conclusion

Although previously dismissed as a nothing more than a metaphorical or superficial connection, there is sufficient overlapping theory in performance and politics to allow for a more in depth and detailed consideration of the politician as performer. The sociological writings of Goffman and Hochschild brought to light the significance of performance skills in interpersonal communication, therefore opening up the field to the more detailed study of practical performance outside the traditional scope of theatrical 'acting' onstage.

Their work also pointed out some of the more pertinent questions to be later applied to the specific example of the political performer, including questions of environment, team participation, emotional labour and audience demand. Although explored in a different context, the work of these sociologists goes far toward beginning the study of performance in a unique and practical circumstance.

Using the theories and observations of Goffman and Hochschild as a base, we can then turn to performance theory and attempt to place our newly identified political performers within the context of other types performance. Emerging from this is the idea that performance can be assessed on a kind of scale, and does not have to fit into the strict confines of a traditional Western definition. Also evident within performance theory is that the traditional language of the stage has assumed various connotations within politics, making it difficult to rely on those terms to adequately discuss political

performance. However, within contemporary performance theory there are many alternate terms that have more direct and undiluted relevance to the political performer.

The goal of this chapter was to place the politician alongside the performer theoretically, and to draw attention to their similarities. That theoretical connection being established, it is necessary to examine how the practice of performing can be similarly compared and contrasted. It also highlights the fact that there are various forms of performance that may require different skill sets from the performer, including ritualised performance. The following chapters will examine the political performer's role in these forms of performance in practice, and the need for the politician to learn vital communicative skills from the work of their creative counterparts.

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1 Lewis discusses several examples in *Trail Fever;* this is also discussed in the work of Greg Palast

2 For specific examples, see Rodham Clinton, Hillary. (2003). *Living History.* p.106-110

Chapter 3 - Ritual

Ritual Performance and the Politician

In a sense, Marhsall discusses the idea of two forms of performance in his description of the two "terrains of legitimation of leadership". (Marshall, 1997, p 227) His description focuses more on the necessities of communicating leadership than on the means of doing so, however, he does observe that those two terrains require the leader to "...provide evidence of familiarity while providing evidence of exceptionality and hierarchical distance." (Marshall, 1997, p 227) What I have labeled the persona-based mode of performance is the means of communicating that familiarity. The persona is the political performer's means of communicating the self. Ritual performance establishes the distance and therefore supports the notion that the successful politician is entitled to the position they hold.

Marshall also addresses the fact that the need to embody the institutional aspect of leadership is difficult to maintain in congruence with the need for similarity and communication with a mass public. He draws comparison with the American film star; noting that in many cases the film star must also make a clear connection with the public, yet remain distant and therefore "special" and worthy of such heightened recognition. (Marshall, 1997, p 228) A significant difference is that the film star generally establishes distance through the nature of their performances. Films are less intimate and familiar than television and the narrative of the film generally provides a different image to that portrayed as the public persona. The politician, however, does

not have the same access to narrative text and therefore establishes distance through ritual and ceremony.

Political uses of ritual have evolved over time. As opposed to persona based performances, ritualised political performances have, perhaps, an even longer history, since public rituals can date back further than organised government. (Bowen, 1971, p 104) The rituals of tribal and pre-industrial society served as an expressive performance, a sacred rite and a means of societal control and leadership. As Turner discusses in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* the performers in pre-industrial ritual took part both as active participants and as representatives. The rituals followed the basic structure of the seasonal change and the continuing life cycle. They both represented and created a form of power.

Within ritual performance there is a lack of distinction between the creation of character and presentation, and the participation in an actual event. In many instances, the ritual performance has a specific or practical function. That may involve the first of a seasonal activity, such as planting seeds, harvesting, or even opening a door. The action itself may be practical, but the meaning is more symbolic. The individual participating in the event may take on a symbolic role as well and yet as individuals they remain secondary to the ritual itself. Their role in ceremony often surpasses their individual persona.

Historically, the political performer has been expected to take on ritual roles in the community, or in community events. In ancient Greece, ceremonies or performances dedicated to the god of wine and fertility, Dionysus, consisted of a cast of 50 men, five from each of the ten tribes of Attica, all gathering around the alter of the god to perform

a type of hymn called the dithyramb. (Hartnoll, 1985, p 8) While the event had the initial impression of a religious performance, the political content must be inferred from the diplomatic equality of the representatives. It must also be acknowledged that such a gathering of community leaders would undoubtedly have created an opportunity to discuss various issues of concern to them all. Much like the contemporary rituals and photo-opportunities, the ancient ritual performance allowed the community leaders the opportunity to appear together in the effort of accomplishing a prescribed task and its political as well as religious merits cannot be dismissed, even so early in human history.

As Combs points out, often our rituals are the first things to be presented to other groups or nations as a means of creating a common ground of understanding. (Combs, 1980, p 22-25) Rituals create a form of introduction. In our contemporary world, this can involve the tight protocol of formal state receptions, or the progression of a motorcade of visiting dignitaries. In the case of the Dionysian ritual, it involved the ceremonial acknowledgement of a common goal, and it provided equal ground on which the representatives could meet. In both instances the individual's performance of the ritual has a potentially significant impact on how that which they represent will be perceived.

Political ritual often involves the evocation of a particularly strong image or an ideal version of the leader. In Ancient Greece leaders were often expected to be the incarnations of deities or the heroic archetypes popularised by myths, legends and the Homeric poems. (McCelland, 1996, p 5-8) These roles took on a ritualised nature that was often presented to the people as pageantry as much as religious or government ritual.

This overt ritualisation, in varying degrees, continued right into the time of the first published philosophies on political thought and the training or preparation it required. Plato wrote that in his time there were those who supported the tradition of maintaining the archetypal character, stating that they believed "...all aspects of life should be regulated according to precepts derivable from the Homeric Poems". (McCelland, 1996, p 5-8) This notion may seem absurd, but on closer consideration would appear to be not so different from the belief of contemporary sects that life and law should be regulated only by example from the Bible.

Contemporary Western rituals are, at least superficially, more separate in their political or religious classifications, but nonetheless, politicians are regularly expected to take part in ritual communication, or at the very least, publicly acknowledge the significance of such acts. (Combs, 1980, p 34) For example, the politician unable or unwilling to take part in a state funeral may not be forced to participate directly, but a public statement regarding the sanctity of the occasion will be expected and anticipated by the press. Likewise, a politician unable to attend the opening of an important building, or a traditional event will be expected to acknowledge the importance of the event by sending an appropriate representative.

In our political context, we tend not to view rituals with the same sense of re-creation and purpose that were prevalent throughout ancient history and remain so in some religious and cultural communities. Our rituals, particularly those played out for the benefit of the medium of television, have the appearance of spontaneity and present-ness. Whereas the Dionysian ritual and other, more religious rituals evoke a clear sense of history and submersion of the individual, contemporary political rituals, such as the

inauguration of a President or Prime Minister often appear to promote only the individual. But despite the lack of a visible historical link, contemporary rituals are no less significant to our social consciousness. As Combs writes,

> "...ritual dramatically expresses the legitimacy and power accorded certain symbols of a group, it is obvious that political groups would utilise them. Governments...find it useful to communicate the legitimate right to exercise power to other groups and the mass public."
>
> (Combs, 1980, p 22)

Combs classifies several types of political ritual, including those of succession, such as the inauguration of a President; rituals of office, which include unveilings, public appearances, and awards ceremonies (which in the UK are shared between the political leaders and the Royal head of state); and rituals of public mourning, such as state funerals. (Combs, 1980, p 30-41) In each instance the individual political performer is aligned with the historical or institutional embodiment of the position he currently holds. To do so serves to strengthen that position and encourage the public to give them the respect and obedience the institution traditionally demands.

It can also have practical consequences. Ritual performance can allow political adversaries the opportunity to meet on common ground, or it can attract attention to issues of importance that may be easily overlooked. In her book entitled *Living History*, Hillary Rodham Clinton notes that her position as First Lady was essentially an extension of her husband's symbolic role as leader and as a result, many of her duties demanded ritual or symbolic action. Although she found it initially difficult to equate symbolic actions with "legitimate" ones, her experiences in traveling abroad in that capacity made it clear that ritual performances can yield certain results. (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 265) In particular she notes that, "...merely by traveling to South Asia with Chelsea [Clinton] would send a message about the importance of daughters.

Visiting poor rural women would underscore their significance." (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 265)

The symbolic presence of a visiting world leader (or their representative) can also generate practical action by those members of the "team" responsible for preparing the performance. The performance area must be prepared so as to support the performance, and often repairs or improvements will be made, if only temporarily, to a site. In Rodham Clinton's case, one of her symbolic visits prompted a local government to improve transportation conditions to an orphanage in India, something the staff there recognised as an immediate practical benefit. (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 276)

In some ways, ritual performance is more closely related to political performance than is possible for 'acting' or more traditional western incarnations of performance. Rothenbuhler makes several important points that draw attention to the fact that political performance is, in part, more closely related to the ritual. He asserts that ritual performance has a unique communicative capacity because it "...simultaneously depends on an actor's performance and operates as a condition on that performance, limiting the range of the actor's choices."(Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 67)

Any ritual performance is, in a sense, a restricted performance. Rituals are, by nature, fairly strict in their requirements of the individual performer. For that reason, it is difficult to imagine the performer having much freedom of personal expression within the ritual format. However, the individual's *ability* to perform is of great importance. The individual who does not participate properly in the event risks damaging the overall impression, or completion of the ritual. As discussed by Goffman, the more significant

the individual's participation, the more able he or she is to damage the overall result. The use of strict protocol in official political activity can therefore be viewed as an attempt to ensure that the individual does not exert too much influence on the ritual, thereby altering the historical significance. Politics, or more accurately, the various constructs that lead to the popular conception of the political aesthetic, similarly restricts the choices of the political performer, limiting their ability to create a persona based on what is accepted and required, while demanding that they display a commitment to and a skill in the performance. Just as the constraints of television and radio might limit their use of oratorical devices, the very nature of the ritual might limit a performer to maintain a certain tradition. The political performer is both held still and pushed forward by the structures of symbolic communication.

This occurs on multiple levels. The politician is limited by public expectation, the tradition of political performance and other constraints upon their ability to communicate or construct their persona. But they are also active participants in more "obvious" rituals, or ceremonial performances required by tradition or other historical and cultural constructs. Denton and Woodward write that ritual, much like myth, acts as a link between the individual and the community of which he or she is a part. Both serve to promote compliance by supporting particular actions, events, or principles and by giving the individual a sense of belonging. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 44) They note that large-scale public events help create a common thread through which the larger population can identify roles and archetypes, and, in the process, generate a certain respect or at least authority in these roles. Events such as inaugural celebrations or ceremonies present a historical lineage, and function as acts of "...remembrance, legitimisation and celebration."(Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 44)

The politician's participation in these events helps to secure their professional persona, and therefore dramatic distance, in the eyes of the public. Many of these rituals are accompanied by a symbolic physical movement that further separates the individual from the group or audience. As Turner writes, the progression "...from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another."(Turner, 1964, p 21) For example, when a President or Prime Minister takes office, there is a certain display of ritual that accompanies that transition. In the US, it is traditional for attention to be paid to the president-elect's progression towards the White House. In several countries there is a symbolic entry into the new official residence that attracts attention from on lookers and media. Even practical physical movement can be given a ceremonial or ritual status. Rothenbuhler observes that,

> "...entering a room can be seen as a goal-directed activity; doing so to the accompaniment of a band playing 'Hail to the Chief' as uniformed guards snap to attention and all in the audience rise to their feet can be seen as an activity marked by aesthetic excess and hence, ritualised."
>
> (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 19)

Rothenbuhler also notes that the ceremonial or ritual aspect of political life is not optional for the national leader. The business of leadership involves communicating on a variety of levels, and one of the primary means of doing so is through ritual and ceremony. These ceremonies may be adapted to 'political requirements', but they are still necessary. (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 101) For example, the ritual of a public announcement of agreement would have been necessary in the case of the 1993 peace accord between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat. However, the details of the actual ceremony were carefully arranged to suit the political requirements of all parties, including then US President Bill Clinton, who hosted the event. (Stephanopoulous,

1993, p 190-93) In this instance, the political considerations of the participants had more than a superficial importance. The details of the ritual determined how the peace accord would be perceived by the rest of the world: as a positive or a potentially dangerous arrangement. Though the handshake that formed the primary image of the meeting was a relatively small gesture, it (along with the facial expressions and other visible reactions of the participating individuals) had significant symbolic importance.

Rothenbuhler's understanding of political ritual can be read to include the political persona. He states "...the identity a person presents is a ritual performance of a position in a network of social relations and a ritually co-ordinated sequence of social actions."(Rothenbuther, 1998, p 110) It is true that even during an election campaign the politician is expected to fulfil certain obligatory social activities. What once might have been referred to as the 'baby-kissing' cliché, one can now see in the mandatory television appearances and photo-opportunities. Naturally, once in office, the pressures to conform to those set standards of action and response increase. In a sense, this observation runs parallel to that of Hochschild, whose description of the emotional labourer suggests that they are expected to maintain a socially approved pattern of action and response throughout their workday.

Marshall suggests that the demand for political leaders to participate in these events stems, in part, from the need to develop a cohesive image for the public (Marshall, 1997, p 222-223) to draw their attention away from partisanship or political loyalties and to allow the leader to appear to surpass those supposedly petty considerations. By placing themselves in a ceremonial and representative role, the politician is allowing the public the opportunity to support them without partisan commitment and therefore

establish a connection with them. The greater the connection with the public, the more the politician comes to be seen as a symbol, and therefore a cohesive representative of the public as a whole. The political performer who becomes a symbolic representation also manages to serve as a control for the public. The general support for one individual serves to give cohesion and rationality to a disparate and otherwise chaotic mass.

Hilton observes "...the performer becomes the tangible embodiment of a defining element in the collective consciousness."(Hilton 1987, p 8) The political performer is perhaps the most direct embodiment of the collective consciousness, because those two 'terrains' of performance ensure that the individual's persona is one that is of greatest affinity with the public's desires and that their institutional self is deeply embedded in the traditional, or ritual role.

However, the term 'ritual', like the theatrical terms used in a political context, can be misappropriated and subsequently devalued through overuse. The political performance that is labeled a 'ritual' appearance can imply that there is an emptiness behind the performance, or a lack of emotional investment. In some instances it can take on the same meaning as 'mandatory'. But even when used indirectly, the idea of ritual upholds an important part in the political performance.

Contemporary examples of ritual and the responses they generate from the public would apparently signify a society that still requires such performance as a means of identifying itself and its history. Despite the popular cynicism associated with the pre-arranged communication, the fact that ceremony is still regarded as significant would suggest that a heightened sense of presentation in its leaders is something society still

demands, as well as the opportunity to once again be the participant/audience in large scale ceremony. Rather than being rendered obsolete by the advent of 24 hour media, ceremony and ritual have perhaps taken on an even greater significance. In a world where media continually provide intimate, detailed information about our leaders and our culture, it is sometimes necessary and beneficial to allow a certain amount of ritual and distance. Raymond Williams notes that in a media culture, our faith in our political leaders and institutions can be tested and confused by the fact that we are shown not only the final performance, but the auditions and the rehearsals as well. (Williams, 1989, p 9) By this he refers to the extensive 'backstage' or strategy based coverage of political events that has become prevalent in contemporary media. This 'behind-the-scenes' information, covered extensively by media, does not always provide an adequate perspective on the overall political process. Ceremony and ritual help to maintain a consistency that can be lost in the constant change of day to day details.

These images also help to provide a bank of collective imagery associated with the symbolic aspects of leadership. Political scientists have paid some attention to the distinction between the institution and the individual in high political office, particularly in the United States, where the President embodies the roles of both national elected leader and symbolic head of state. The general consensus that emerges indicates that the institution is thus more carefully constructed in the collective eye of the public, ensuring that it outlasts and indeed survives any individual who may inhabit it. However, as long as the political performer embodies the role to the satisfaction of the audience, he or she will also benefit from the strong sense of continuity it provokes.

But errors in the performance of a ritual by a leader can have very real political effects. If the performer fails to perform the role as expected, there can be negative reactions from the public.

Schechner describes this act as "profanation" and notes that in a situation where profanation occurs, the public will often react by disengaging with the individual, or marginalizing him to remove him from the group. (Schechner, 1988, p 197) Much like the actor who breaks with concentration and character during a performance, the politician who does not uphold the institutional identity during a political ritual destroys the audience's suspension of disbelief and reminds them of the imperfect reality. Their attention is then drawn to the failings of the individual rather than the strength of the institution. (Combs, 1980, p 25) In this type of situation, Rothenbuhler observes that when the individual is expelled from the group, the "community" is "ritually strengthened" (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 85) rather than damaged by the failings of one of its own. This occurs even in situations where the individual may only be working for, or representative of, accepted practice in the group. Politically, while members of the community are quick to distance themselves from one who has been exposed as different from his or her projected public persona, most members of office must use similar techniques for communication.

In his study of impression and image management, Leary notes the most obvious of explanations for the avoidance of the topic of performance in any context outside of its traditional, or theatrical interpretation. Although almost everyone is aware of, if not specifically concerned with the impressions they make on other individuals, no one is interested in admitting that concern. In fact, most people will go so far as to deny that

they make any conscious effort to control the impressions they make. He also points out that denials of self-interest are also expressions of self-interest. They serve to make the individual appear more confident. We cannot, however, assume that those we attempt to influence are questioning our presentations. Leary writes that "To achieve our goals in social life, we must assume that others take our public impression at face value - that they do not doubt that we are who and what we appear to be."(Leary, 1996, preface)

Thus, the desire to avoid the topic of performance can be seen to stem from the fear of appearing too concerned with appearances. It should be noted, however, that for the politician, who, in a world of aggressive media can no longer assume that their presented self is passively taken at "face value", the experience is even more self-conscious. Nevertheless, Leary's conclusion generates yet another question: why be concerned about appearing concerned with appearances? Since, as Leary puts it, "...far from being a sign of insecurity, vanity or shallowness, a certain degree of concern for one's public impressions is essential for smooth and successful social interaction."(Leary, 1996, Preface)

Goffman's work explores the possibility that individuals do not like to discuss the performance skills that helped them achieve their positions or roles because they are embarrassed to admit that any effort or struggle on their part was required.

> "...we find performers often foster the impression that they had ideal motives for acquiring the role in which they are performing, that they have ideal qualifications for the role and that it was not necessary for them to suffer any indignities, insult, and humiliations, or make any 'deals', in order to acquire the role."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 46)

Goffman refers to this as "sacred compatibility" and notes that it is particularly common in members of "the higher professions" (Goffman, 1959, p 46), of which national political office can certainly be considered.

It is clear that on a basic level, Goffman's theory makes practical sense. Just as most magicians or other stage performers would not wish their audience to see them struggling through a rehearsal, very rarely would an individual in a position of authority and prestige wish to potentially weaken their position by drawing attention to their more "human" days of student life, compromise or ambitious career planning; or to the backstage dealings that helped them achieve such a position. In many instances, disclosure of such information could destroy an individual's established persona, and even result in their removal from office. The ritual distance gives the individual at least some measure of protection from the constant barrage of scrutiny from the audience and the media. It can provide an opportunity to establish oneself as an institutional leader.

This type of distance allows us to view both the individual in office and the office itself as two separate entities. Part of the leader's performance skills must be focused on the ability to distinguish between what is ritual theatre (i.e.: when he or she is performing an institutional role) and when the required performance is more personal. This distinction has been described as the difference between the statesman and the politician; (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 255) the statesman being a recognised symbol of the institution of government and leadership, while the politician is still required to communicate their individual persona to compete for attention and support. Though the label of statesman is generally reserved for older, and possibly retired political leaders who no longer have to use performance for the purpose of securing votes, it is possible

for an individual to embody both titles. An established institutional leader has the benefit of being both statesman and politician, though likely not during the same performance.

A particularly interesting example of this dichotomy lies in the many polling figures complied during the Bill Clinton impeachment hearings in 2000. During the height of the media interest in the scandal, Clinton's approval ratings (a method of public polling used frequently in the US) remained unusually high, and even rose to over 70%, when Clinton appeared in various official capacities. (Fishchle, 2000, p 439) The State of Union address and several other national matters took attention back to the institution of the presidency and away from the personal failings of the man in office. Staff member George Stephanopoulos notes that by "...never mentioning the issue that had consumed his presidency, but armed with an arsenal of popular proposals...Clinton made his own best case..." (Stephanopoulos, 1999, p 442)

Journalists noted that his performance during these events further separated him from the adulterous image being perpetrated in the media. He "worked hard to appear Presidential"(Lawrence & Bennett, 2001, p 116) and when appearing in that presidential capacity avoided discussion of his personal life. He played the ritualised role of the President to satisfaction and was rewarded with approval from the audience. Fishchle writes, "His performance arguably influenced public opinion as much as his recital of policy positions and accomplishments." (Fishchle, 2000, p 439) His approval ratings dropped only after he appeared in a televised apology, outside the environment and ritual of the institutional presidency. When he addressed the scandal personally, the

audience judged him personally, and he saw a sudden, though brief decrease in popularity. (Fishchle, 2000, p 439)

Clinton's ability to make political use of performance and ritual communication helped to maintain his popularity in the face of unyielding pressure from media. But the excessive media attention to the details of his performance also point out another shared problem between the actor and the political performer: once in a performance setting each element of their behavior and appearance will be judged as part of that performance. The semiotics of working within a frame, theatrical, interpersonal or ritual, demand that the performer be aware of the implications of all his actions at all times.

Conclusion

Exploring the closeness of political performance to traditional performance raises questions regarding ritual and its links to the contemporary political performer. It is clear that ritual performance has a place in political life, and that it requires a particular set of skills and knowledge. Ritual or symbolic performance is imparted through the political performer and constitutes a large part of the required public performance. The skilled political performer will be aware that performing the rituals demanded by the history and stature of the institution requires more distance than would other interpersonal communication. The political performer will also recognise that when performing within the ritual frame, all appearance and behavior, however unconscious, will be valued as part of the overall meaning of the performance.

In order to fully develop the skills necessary to participate effectively in both 'terrains' of political performance, the performer must have an understanding of the practical use of performance in context. The following chapter further expands upon the theory to examine the shared skills of the political performer and the professional performer.

Chapter 4 - Practice

Structural Similarities

It has been established that there is sufficient theoretical basis for the analysis of the politician as a performer. But beyond the aforementioned theoretical comparisons, there are many practical aspects of performance that find a shared usage between political and professional performers. One of the most obvious similarities is the external elements that help define the performance. That is to say, the structures such as set, lighting, amplification, script, and costume that enhance or promote the performance.

As with so many other aspects of the study of communicative performance, Goffman's work leads the way in defining and understanding these external accoutrements. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman describes several of these features as the "front". He defines the front as the standard, or perceptible tools or "equipment" employed by an individual during a social performance. (Goffman, 1959, p 22) In some instances they may be used unconsciously, while other situations may demand that they be pre-planned to a great degree. In either instance they have an effect on the audience's perception of the resulting performance.

Goffman considers the three primary aspects of the "front" to be "...setting, appearance and manner". (Goffman, 1959, p 29) His definition of "setting" is akin to that of the theatrical, which the *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* defines as any surroundings, visible to an audience, in which the action develops. This is acknowledged to include everything arranged within the performance space. (Hartnoll, 1972, p 489) Goffman

specifies that his definition of set includes furniture, environment, lighting, and "stage props"; anything that supports "...the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it..."(Goffman, 1959, p 22)

His understanding of "appearance" confines it to the visual indications of a person's function and social status. Clothing, jewellery, and hairstyle (Goffman, 1959, p 24) can be included in this description, making it more encompassing, if similar, to the theatrical 'costume'.

"Manner" is distinguished from "appearance" in that it refers to the more intangible symbols of attitude that are employed by individuals in any given setting. Examples include such things as vocabulary and posture. As Goffman recognises, human nature seems to expect a certain amount of consistency between the appearance and the manner. (Goffman, 1959, p 24) Evaluations of 'sincerity' are often made based on this consistency. In a political context, this can be seen in assessments of 'plain speaking' politicians who dress informally to converse with their constituents. For example, during the 2000 US Presidential campaign, media reports of George W. Bush regularly attributed his perceived 'sincerity' to consistently casual attire and colloquial speech patterns. (Miller, 2000, p 107) Ronald Reagan received similar response during his political career. (Miller, 1988, p 88)

This combination of setting, manner and appearance can, in some instances, be considered the total performance in and of itself. In situations where speech content is not significant, the individual's manner and appearance become the sum totals of the communication. (Postman, 1986, p 97) For example, during the 1993 signing of the

Israel/Palestine Peace Accord, the 'front' was the primary communicative tool. Former US Presidential Communications Director George Stephanopolous writes that a significant amount of thought and debate encompassed notions of wardrobe, facial expression, positioning, movement, and stance. (Stephanopolus, 1999, p 192-93) These elements of "front" relayed an important message that could support or undercut any verbal assertions.

McNair suggests that Prime Minister Tony Blair's major political strength was in his ability "to communicate, with his image, to the electorally crucial voters of Southern England". (McNair, 1999, p 143) In this instance, the use of the term 'image' is both literal and figurative. While his public communication was considered 'image', the communications referred to here were literally based on the image broadcast through television. This communication *through* image implies that it is a co-ordination of 'manner' and 'front' that allow the audience to make judgements on the individual's personality, ability and leadership potential.

These aspects of the 'front' comprise the standard tools of any theatrical performance. They are elements designed to aid the audience in their interpretation of the events and individuals being presented to them. As Goffman observes, in order to convey the ideal message during a relatively limited interaction, it is usually necessary to invoke certain signs beyond the content of the address so as to dramatically highlight the key points and to provide some kind of confirmation between the content and the appearance or manner. (Goffman, 1959, p 1) The 'front' serves to emphasise the theme of the message contained in the content and, as is the case with photo-opportunities, occasionally replaces the content altogether. (Goffman, 1959, p 24)

Although Goffman's definition of the 'front' does not include more pre-determined aspects of performance, such as the script, it is still an acknowledgement that external, or superficial factors provide important support to all levels of performance. To that end, they should be paid careful attention.

During most formal appearances or presentations, the politician will be supported by many of the same accoutrements that surround an actor in a play. There is stage and set design, lighting, make-up, script, costume, and occasionally even special effects. Combs refers to these as "dramaturgical elements" (Combs, 1980, p 6) and "histrionic resources" that "underline how simple aspects of the theater pervade everyday life."(Combs, 1980, p 8) Some combination of elements are employed in almost any kind of interaction, from a slightly raised platform at a town hall meeting to an elaborate pyrotechnic display at a national convention. However, it is generally the more overtly theatrical elements that draw the most attention.

These elements used in political performance are one of the few areas that draw active comparison with the theatrical. For example, Lewis describes his impressions of the 'set' of a presidential campaign in the following way:

> "...theater ropes block the entrance to the Oval Office, but still I am able to step inside and look around for a minute or so...The books behind Clinton's desk, fat biographies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman, are clearly props rather than live reading material. The desktop is littered with more props - Russian dolls and Chinese party poppers and other official souvenirs of the president's foreign policy."
>
> (Lewis, 1997, p 143)

The politician's public environment has semiotic value to the public. The surroundings are not simply a backdrop to political performance, they are part of that performance, just as they would be part of a play or film narrative. Therefore the set, like the individual, is presented as a persona.

Also significant are the terms of the theatre that Lewis uses throughout his description. The imagery of the theatre is consistently evoked in descriptions of political settings and activities. In *Political Communication in America*, the authors describe the importance of the political setting to the interpretation of the event as a whole. Although they draw no direct comparison to the professionally designed set of a theatrical performance, the similarities are clear.

> "The setting, then, creates the perspective from which mass audiences will analyze a situation, define their response and establish the emotional context of the act that enfolds...Settings, therefore, condition political acts."
> (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 39)

This creation of perspective is accepted by those accustomed to participating in or attending any theatrical production. The spatial arrangements, not just of the actual performance area but also of the audience's space surrounding it, are expected to have an effect on how the audience will interpret the performance. Whether analysed consciously or not, the set is expected to be significant to the production.

Elam writes that when we enter a theatre or other performance space we develop our initial sense of the performance through the organization of the entire space. The audience's proximity to the stage and to each other helps establish the appropriate level of interaction between them. The dimensions of the space indicate what kind of

performance style can be expected. The form that the staging area takes is indicative of the size of the presentation to follow. The environment in which the performance takes place is an information-rich space, providing many important cues to the audience, even before the first word has been spoken. (Elam, 1980, p 56)

The audience's first glimpse at the assembly hall or convention centre stage that will host a political performance would require the same initial reaction and assessment. The audience can interpret much from the décor, staging, lighting, and even the positioning of the various individuals on and around the stage. Each image carries its own connotations, since it has been orchestrated as part of an overall performance. Even in smaller meetings, when there is no raised platform or detailed décor, a separate seating or speaking space for the politician can generate a heightened attention and scrutiny of the performer, and provide information regarding the performance. In semiotics this is sometimes referred to as a "scenic continuum", (Elam, 1980, p 38) as the set does not have a fixed impact on the audience, but is interpreted based on the fluid development of the actions that it hosts.

The information that the audience derives from the spatial arrangements is taken from life, culture, and behaviour; however, in their everyday lives people do not always register the connotations they accord things. It is when it is presented to them as performance that they can recognise the symbols and acknowledge meaning. Although connotations will obviously differ between the theatrical and the political sectors of performance, their function is essentially the same: the audience is influenced by spatial factors surrounding the performer and the context of the performance.

Other factors similarly contribute to the audience's overall reading of the 'front'. Though make-up, in the context of the political performance, may not seem standard, especially for male political leaders, the prevalent use of media for communication has demanded that in order to look appropriate on camera the politician must undergo a make-up routine similar to that of the professional actor. As Combs writes, "For television appearances, political actors are made up with pancake, eyebrow pencil, powder...and the like, just as any other performer." (Combs, 1980, p 8)

Similarly, one may not anticipate costume as being of much concern to the political performer, but as Goffman's definition of appearance would suggest, the clothes worn by a politician in any particular setting take on significance in conveying the desired information to the audience. For some ritual or ceremonial performances, specific dress is required. In some situations it is expected that the politician appear in an official capacity, and dress formally in business attire. However, they must be careful that the suit is not too expensive, the shoes and accessories not excessively shiny, or else risk alienating the audience with a display of wealth and position.

On other occasions it may be best to dress informally. Denton and Woodward observe that candidates often appear in jeans and flannel shirts to address farmers or labourers, instead of the traditional suit. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 155)

Beyond Goffman's definition of 'front' there are shared practices between the politician and the actor that warrant some investigation. The use of a script may not always seem applicable to the political performer, since much of the public interaction is expected to be comprised of spontaneous reactions to a particular situation. However, this

assessment limits the definition of 'script' to the word-for-word presentation of a prepared written paper. There are several working interpretations of the 'script', many of which deviate from the traditional western understanding of the term.

For example, the 'script' has been defined as any set of comprehensive instructions for performance. This includes the western tradition of written dialogue, but could also include verbally communicated direction and devised work. (Cole, 1975, p 5)

Therefore it can be said that the script encompasses several variations and political performance respects a script in one of its various incarnations, in almost all circumstances. Occasionally, it may take the standard form of a written document, as is the case with prepared speeches and public addresses by national political leaders. George Bush Sr. was known to follow a script so closely that he had difficulty answering questions that were asked in a different order to that which he had prepared. (Gamson, 1994, p 192) These prepared pieces are often composed by a speechwriter, or in some instances by a professional outside the political spectrum. For example, former US presidential candidate Bob Dole's 1996 senate resignation speech was not the work of the candidate, or his staff members, but of a novelist who was hired to create an emotionally riveting script. (Lewis, 1997, p 158) It is not unusual for political leaders to seek input from various sources in preparation of a written script. Former US President Bill Clinton occasionally employed a writer from the popular US television comedy series *Saturday Night Live*. (Rodham Clinton, 2003, p 229 & 287)

In less formal settings, such as meet-and-greet sessions or question-and-answer forums, the script may take the form of instructions or briefings outlined for the politician by a

public relations, communications or political assistant. This is also applicable to situations in which the visual aspect of communication takes precedence. It is this kind of 'script' briefing that US President Bill Clinton received from his staff members prior to public events such as the aforementioned peace accord signing in 1993. (Stephanopoulos, 1999, p 192-93) As there is still a specific message the individual wishes to communicate, the planning of that communication can be called a script. This can include direction on matters of 'front' including placement within a scenic continuum.

As well, the script can take the form of a collaborative effort on the part of the politician and his relevant staff. As reported by the *US News and World Report*, George W. Bush prepared the script for his first major campaign speech in this manner. He and top staff members spent three days collaborating on the text, holding long sessions in which Bush's concerns were incorporated into the piece. Although composed with the assistance of the staff writers, the final speech would have been a devised, or collaborative effort. "'When he gets up there to speak' says speechwriter Gerson, 'He [Bush] will have touched every word of this speech in one way or another.'" (Borger, 2000, p 26)

It is unlikely that a politician would take the stage without some preparation or knowledge of what they are expected to do and say. Whatever incarnation it may take, the politician's performance is generally reliant on a script.

The elements of the 'front', the script and everything within the framework of the performance are powerful codes that, in a theatrical setting, take on greater meaning

than if they were presented informally or outside the audience/performer context. "The spectator will interpret this complex of messages - speech, gesture, the scenic continuum, etc. - as an integrated text according to the theatrical and cultural codes at his disposal..." (Elam, 1980, p 38). That is to say, the audience interprets these external factors in relation to "...social, moral and ideological values operative in the community of which performers and spectators are a part."(Elam, 1980, p 10) Richard Huggins writes that in studies designed to understand how young Britons deconstructed political campaigns it was found that "The cool and detached style of the theatre critic" (Huggins in Axford & Huggins, 2001, p 142) was employed in the deconstruction of campaign activities, or, political performance. This reflects the possibility that the skills developed through interpreting fictional performances are used to assess their real life counterparts.

In order for the politician to be considered a true performer, these elements cannot exist in isolation. They must be synthesised and presented as a support to the work of the individual or team. As Grotowski writes,

> "...theatre can exist without make-up, without...costume and sceneography...without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct...communication."
>
> (Grotowski, 1968, p.19)

For that, the politician must turn to the first instrument of performance; themselves. In order to produce the desired effect in others, they must train their bodies and minds to perform with skill and understanding.

Shared Practices of the Political and Professional Performer

For the political performer, the primary means of direct communication is the voice. Political writers have acknowledged the voice as "...the asset no politician can do without." (Stephanopoulos, 1999, p 82) Even in the overwhelmingly visual world of contemporary media, the majority of direct communication between a politician and the audience is dependant upon the voice. Before the advent of mass communication, the voice would have had an even greater significance. The necessity of the oral tradition for all aspects of public communication would have required the politician or orator to develop the voice physically as well as artistically. As Cicely Berry writes,

> "Speaking and using the voice is partly a physical action involving the use of certain muscles, and, just as an athlete goes into training to get his muscles to the required efficiency...so if you exercise the muscles involved in using the voice, you can increase its efficiency in sound."
> (Berry in Goodman & De Gay, 2000, p 37)

Without amplification, the politician would have had to project clearly and loudly, but still manage to vary delivery and engage the audience. This would have required techniques designed to accommodate extremely large crowds. The large public theatres of Athens and other major population centres were built to house as many as 15 000 spectators. Therefore the distances across which performances had to be projected exceeded the standard sense of public distance. (Hilton, 1987, p 25) Highly stylised delivery would have been necessary, with large, expansive movement, and exaggerated use of oral devices, such as pauses and varied intonation.

Though conditions have changed and amplification has allowed for the use of more subtle vocal techniques, the professional actor and the political performer still share the

need for strong speaking skills. This fact is observed by Ken Howard in his public speaking manual *Act Natural* (Howard, 2003, p 53) and is confirmed by Max Atkinson in his detailed study of the voice and body language of successful political speakers.

Atkinson's work, as compiled in the book *Our Master's Voices,* focuses primarily on linguistic 'tricks' that have been consistently employed by politicians and speech writers to great effect in gaining applause and other positive responses from their audiences. As part of this study, he notes the importance of vocal control in executing the written word effectively. In particular he notes that intonation and other vocal attributes have a direct effect on how the message is delivered, writing that "it is noticeable that the word which carries the key to the contrast and the answer to the puzzle is delivered with rising intonation and an increase in volume and emphasis."(Atkinson, 1994, p 76)

Elam calls these vocal features "paralinguistic features", and goes on to describe them as one of the most basic components of the actor's profession. "Paralinguistic" refers not to the words employed by the speaker, but the speaker's use of the voice as oral 'punctuation'. This punctuation is achieved through the control of such features as pitch, tempo, rhythm and volume. The speaker's ability to manipulate these elements holds the key to the successful communication of content. (Elam, 1980, p 80) Elam uses J.L Davitz's table *(Fig 4.1)* to illustrate how their properties can provide clear indications of emotion. Davitz's table was formulated based on psychological studies and highlights the physical distinctions that lead to interpreted emotion.

Feeling	*Volume*	*Pitch*	*Timbre*	*Rate*	*Inflection*	*Rhythm*	*Enunciation*
Affection	Soft	Low	Resonant	Slow	Steady with slight upward	Regular	Slurred
Anger	Loud	High	Blaring	Fast	Irregular up and down	Irregular	Clipped
Boredom	Moderate to low	Moderate to low	Moderate resonant	Slow	Monotone or gradually falling	Regular	Somewhat slurred
Cheerful-ness	Moderate to high	Moderate high	Moderate blaring	Fast	Up and down; overall upward	Regular	
Impatience	Normal	Normal to moderate high	Moderate blaring	Fast	Slight upward		Somewhat clipped
Joy	Loud	High	Moderate blaring	Fast	Upward	Regular	
Sadness	Soft	Low	Resonant	Slow	Downward	Irregular pauses	Slurred
Satisfaction	Normal	Normal	Somewhat resonant	Normal	Slight upward	Regular	Somewhat slurred

The vocal control that Elam discusses in terms of the above list as central to the work of the actor is also central to the work of the political performer, as is noted in Atkinson's research. A political speaker who is unaware of the implications that such paralinguistic features have on an audience's reading of a particular performance is unlikely to be very successful in establishing the emotions they wish to convey. Likewise, the performer who is aware of the possible implications but has no understanding of how to alter or control them is likely to find communication with an audience difficult. The speaker with a working knowledge of how to best utilise their voice is at a distinct communicative advantage. Berry acknowledges the power of the orator as follows,

> "it is through the speaking voice that you convey your precise thoughts and feelings...it follows therefore that the more responsive and efficient the voice is, the more accurate it will be to your intentions."
>
> (Berry in Goodman & De Gay, 2000, p 39)

Judging from the work of Goffman and Davitz, there is a certain element of instinctual paralinguistic response to an emotional state. Baring any physical disability, any individual is, to some degree, physically capable of emotionally appropriate alteration of the voice. However, re-creating this instinctual vocal response in an environment devoid of emotional stimuli, or overwhelmed by it, requires skill and technique. One of the challenges for the political performer is that they are expected to be 'natural' in unnatural situations. Their vocal response, just like their physiological and verbal response, must be conditioned as appropriate to the situation or topic. It must be clear enough to be understood, yet within an external environment often non conducive to such a response.

Considering its significance to the communication of language, it is not surprising that the study of vocal training is one that has occupied many performance and theatre practitioners and theorists. Many of the conclusions made by those individuals can also be applied to the political performer. While the amount of literature on vocal technique could comprise an entire thesis of its own, it stands in contrast to the relative lack of attention that the voice has been given in political analysis. It is useful here to note that even a limited survey is indicative of what political performers could stand to learn from their performance counterparts.

A key issue for the untrained performer is understanding that they must assess their vocal performance from the perspective of the audience. The untrained performer assesses their vocal performance based on their own understanding of text, diction, volume and clarity. The trained performer is taught that performance must be assessed based on the *audience's* understanding. Stanislavski writes that, "'Self-listening' is not a

proper objective for an actor. It is far more important that he affect others by transmitting to them the things that are in his mind and heart."(Stanislavski, 1950, p 118) This is reiterated by Howard, who suggests that effective speakers are accomplished at using the voice to move "...their audiences and not themselves". (Howard, 2003, p 150) Howard suggests that to transmit emotion through the voice does not require the performer to succumb to emotion. Instead, the voice should remain strong and clear, and not break or choke with emotion. The underlying significance of the situation, and the other elements in the performer's presentation should indicate that emotion is present. (Howard, 2003, p 151-52)

Along the same principle, Gwynth Thurburn notes that it is vitally important that the speaker understand not just what is said, but how it will be received. In other words, the speaker should be aware of the potential influence vocal performance can have on the content of an address. She makes the point that although the speaker may consider himself or herself to be clear and direct, the audience may interpret their performance differently. This point highlights the need for the performer, particularly the political performer, to learn to assess performance from the perspective of the audience. It is a crucial skill that could mean the difference between successful communication and frustrating failure. Thurburn states that the basic requirements for clear oral communication are as follows, "...clarity, fluency, and appropriate phrasing...If in addition to the presence of these factors the voice has a pleasing quality, the speakers effectiveness is greatly increased."(Turburn in Hodgson, 1972, p 88)

Exactly what constitutes that 'pleasing quality' is not specified, but from several of the aforementioned studies, we can conclude that what is interpreted as a generally pleasant

voice is usually lower in pitch, slower in speed (Atkinson, 1994, p 113) and clear, or without a raspy or breathy sound. Of course, how one interprets the quality of the voice will also be dependant upon the overall impression of the performance.

For this reason, the term 'speech' can, in some instances, be taken to include the sum total of the communication, including the physical communication of information as well as the vocal content. The movements and gestures of the individual must be considered so as to ensure that they, too, are appropriate to the intentions of the speaker, as they have definite effects on how the audience interprets the communication. Denton and Woodward write that the audience often makes conclusions on the personal characteristics of an individual based on their verbal behaviour. Whereas the content of their address might inform the viewer's opinion regarding their professional or rational abilities, verbal behaviour is responsible for informing their opinions about the attitude, honesty and warmth of the individual. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 57) These features are, of course, equally important to the viewer's overall impression of the individual and have at least as much influence on the decision to vote in their favour. Therefore it is important that the content of a presentation be congruent with the physical or behavioural aspect.

Hilton writes that speech, far from being limited to the creation of sound, is in fact the total interaction of sound, silence, intonation and movement. Without synchronization between language, voice and body, the meaning of any content can be lost. (Hilton, 1987, p 112)

Like the content of the script, the physical movements of the performer require careful attention, as they can be perceived by the audience as even more indicative of the persona than the words the individual speaks. While content may demand that the politician put in some vocal rehearsal for a public appearance, the significant physical aspect of the interaction is often completely forgotten.

Of all the elements of self that the performer uses in the course of the performance none is more significant, nor more obvious, than the body. The performer's body, its movement and appearance, in the context of performance, is a symbol for the audience to read and interpret. It is also an instrument, through which information and emotion can be directly communicated.

As Elam writes in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama,*

> "The actor's body acquires its mimetic and representational powers by becoming something other than itself, more and less than individual. This applies equally to his speech (which assumes the general signified discourse) and to every aspect of his performance...to the extent that even purely contingent factors such as physiologically determined reflexes are accepted as signifying units...The audience starts with the assumption that every detail is an intentional sign and whatever cannot be related to the representation as such is converted into a sign of the actors very reality - it is not, in any case, excluded from semiosis."
>
> (Elam, 1980, p 9)

Just as the physical space can inform the audience's understanding of the performance, so, too, does the performer's appearance and behaviour offer a wealth of information to the audience. Once the performer appears in front of the audience, everything about behaviour, appearance and speech are interpreted as some sort of sign. The meanings assigned to these signals come from past experiences, social constructs and observations. But they are more readily recognised in the context of performance.

It is the job of the performer to control the signs that are being presented, so that they can use all available means to communicate the desired information. The best means of doing so are an issue of debate among performance practitioners. But just as the actor must find a method of training and practice that works for them individually, so must the political performer. The wealth of different methods and advice for performers would imply that there is a means to assist any individual in their preparations for a performance, depending on their needs and existing skills.

Some of the most famous advice to the performer may be applied to the political performer as well. Hamlet's advice to the players encompasses many rules of performance that have come to be expected by audiences of both professional theatre and political communication alike. The details of the monologue have come to be interpreted as Shakespeare's own advice to actors. Any interpretation must be prefaced with the qualification that it is also very specific to both the context of the play, particularly its part in Hamlet's attempt to test his uncle, and the theatrical conventions of the time. Still, many of the points it makes are very much applicable to the contemporary performer.

> "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of you players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for overdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod. Pray you avoid it..."
>
> (Shakespeare in Harwood, 1994, p 76)

This excerpt deals with that fine line between a skilled performance and an ineffective melodrama that is of concern to the political performer, particularly in dealing with performance in various media. It also suggests a concern with pandering to the masses or 'groundlings'. One of the concerns with political performance is that it turns political argument into just the kind of "dumb-shows and noise" that Shakespeare associates with the majority of popular entertainment. The more pronounced and obvious performance that best appeals to the television audience also serves to incur their disapproval, since it highlights the fact that the individual is indeed performing.

> "...Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."
>
> (Shakespeare in Harwood, 1994, p 76)

Here it would seem that Shakespeare's advice turns against itself, yet this could not be further from the truth. He is acknowledging that by 'under performing', the actor risks the intention being lost, and therefore must take care that each action suits intention. All told, he is suggesting moderation and appropriate action. He notes that the actions of the performer are intended to reflect the actions of life. For the political performer, it is often a requirement that they exhibit emotions that are appropriate in life if not in their specific situation. Of course, the context of the play also exerts its own significance on these words.

> "...Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play - an heard others praise, and that highly - not to speak

> of it profanely, that, neither having th'accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have though some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably...
>
> "O reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them - for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready."
>
> (Shakespeare in Harwood, 1994, p 76)

The last part of Hamlet's speech offers some interesting insights into the dilemma of the political performer. While they may spend much of their performance time on trying to gain the attention and affection of their audience, they would be ill-advised to do so by overextending themselves in a performance setting. The political performer who makes uncomfortable attempts at humour, or employs negative attacks to gain support often faces the wrath of the audience, who feel they are being manipulated. Also, an attempt to steal more attention and performance time by going beyond that which is 'set down for them' is certainly a political leader who is betraying their ambition.

Hamlet's speech has several goals that are specific in terms of the play. He wishes the players to perform in a certain manner so as to entrap his uncle/step-father and therefore advance the plot. But he is also making a statement about theatre and audiences. Though his words come from a specific time and place, there are certain essential elements that are of interest to the contemporary actor and political performer.

Barish suggests that Hamlet's desire to instruct the players stems from a desire to be one of them. (Barish, 1981, p 128) His advice on the player's performance certainly exhibits the enthusiasm of an avid fan, and perhaps, amateur practitioner. It would seem that the

life of the player would offer up an opportunity to escape his current situation both physically, through the nomadic lifestyle, and emotionally, through the adoption of a character onstage. What Hamlet does not state, or perhaps what he does not realise, is that he is already actively engaged in a "virtuoso" performance. (Barish, 1981, p 128) If he is experiencing envy, it is not so much aimed at the desire to perform, but the desire to perform openly. Similarly, the politician may admire the actors liberated performance without noting that their own circumstances make them exemplary performers. Like Hamlet, the politician might be knowledgeable of performance skills, but would not think to apply those same skills to their own situation.

In the contemporary world, the skills of the stage are only a portion of those needed to communicate effectively. With the growth of media, the politician has a larger potential audience and a greater potential responsibility to his or her performance. The media requires a specific set of skills, and has its own semiotic and technical concerns. The skills of the stage are necessary for any political performer and provide a base from which other techniques can be learned. But in the present environment, adaptation to more than one type of performance is an absolute necessity.

Conclusion

The actor and the political performer share a host of practical similarities, the study of which can be of benefit to both. They may have different purposes in communication, and their scripts may take different forms, but in many ways their goals are the same: to communicate their message as effectively as possible. The actor might approach this goal in a direct manner. The political performer, often for reasons beyond their control, is expected to do so without too much attention to the fact that performance is required.

In order to gain attention by the post-debate discussion conducted by both media and audience, the politician must convey their persona non-verbally. They must also be aware that whether they plan and prepare or not, their actions, appearance, and sound will be given meaning. If the political performer wishes to convey a message effectively, it is necessary to understand that that message is interpreted based on all these factors, and not just the delivery of content.

Chapter 5 - Media

Requirements of the Television Media

For those politicians who, despite the challenges, have managed to successfully develop adequate performance skills, one of the most difficult aspects of contemporary political life can be adapting those skills to the requirements specific to the television medium. According to Franklin, politicians who began their careers at public rallies and union meetings focused on vocal technique and content, as opposed to the more image conscious performance needed for television. These politicians respond to debate and even heckling better than they do the sound bite (a short audio or video segment of an event or interview that supposedly provides definitive insight into the whole event). The skills that gained them recognition in Parliament or Congress are of little interest to the news programmers and the general television audience. (Franklin, 1994, p 10-11)

Television has become a pervasive form of communication in our world, particularly the western world, and its encompassing nature ensures that any political leader unable or unwilling to use it as a means of communication will be at a distinct disadvantage in getting their message across. Though a popular reaction is to condemn television newsmakers for their shallow coverage of political activity, or even applaud politicians for refusing to acquiesce to imitations, the reality is far more complex.

The television media cannot be dismissed as *simply* a means of communication. It is not a benign force transmitting information. It plays an active role in the political process on many levels. As Denton and Woodward observe in *Political Communication in America*,

> "It is virtually impossible to distinguish between our political system and the media as separate entities. Television, as a medium, has changed the form and content of American politics. This change is not so much the result of how the medium is used as much as the requirements or essential nature of the medium."
>
> (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 55-56)

Though other Western countries have felt the influence of media on their political systems to a somewhat lesser (or perhaps *later*) extent, it is certainly true that television has, in recent years, had a marked influence on our interpretation of events and performance both on and off screen.

Harrop and Miller write that television is "far and away the more important medium of electoral communication in nearly all democracies" (Harrop & Miller, 1987, p 222) because of its almost universal reach and the perception of authority and objectivity that accompanies the visual media. They describe any politician who dismisses the authority television has acquired in the eyes of the electorate as "foolhardy". (Harrop & Miller, 1987, p 222)

In order to best communicate with the audience the politician must have as much knowledge as possible about the practical and cultural aspects of television performance. Yet despite teams of political advisors and press secretaries, very few politicians admit to including in their central staff anyone to help prepare them for the specific requirements of a televised public performance.

Informality is one of the key distinctions between television and live political oratory. Whereas the town hall establishes a physical public distance between performer and audience that lends itself to a more impassioned delivery, the television studio often

attempts to reflect the atmosphere of the living room, where just such a delivery would be off-putting and extreme. The creation of this communication device has not just increased the need for a skilled political performer, but also one who is versatile in the techniques of several varied media.

Tony Barr's manual for acting in film and television goes into a rather extensive explanation of the differences between stage acting and television performance. He equates much of the difference to the alteration of physical space. He notes that in a theatre, or other live performance space, the audience is at some distance from the performer, and it is anticipated that the performer will accommodate those furthest from the stage. Therefore even those in the front row are anticipating a heightened level of performance. The voice will be louder, the gestures bigger, and the alterations in tone clearer. The performer's primary emphasis is not on the subtleties of eye movement or small gestures as they would be imperceptible to all but the closest audience members.

Barr contrasts this with the observation that on television the audience is only as distant as the camera, which in most instances is at a close proximity to the performer. In this case, the subtleties used in one on one communication are highly visible and in some instances magnified.

As well, the director and editor can focus the audience's attention on a specific gesture or expression, giving it particular significance. Barr concludes that this difference in proximity to the audience is what alters perception of that performance. (Barr, 1997, p 3-4)

The issue of proximity is also an issue of intimacy and formality. When the audience is at what Combs refers to as 'public distance', there is a naturally assumed formality to even the most everyday situations. Natural distinction between audience and performer will encourage a more structured presentation. The camera eliminates that distance and therefore encourages a more intimate approach to communication. The basic skills employed by the communicator will remain the same, but the extent to which they are implemented will necessarily differ with the shift in proximity, or formality.

In his book, *Confessions of an Actor*, Laurence Olivier argues that the skills needed within this new, more direct medium, are not fundamentally different from those employed upon the stage. He encourages the performer not to think of the stage and the camera as two fundamentally different entities. Rather he suggests that skilled performance can be applied to both as ..."They call for the same ingredients, but in different proportions."(Olivier in Barr, 1997, p 6)

Political observers have not been oblivious to the effects of the enhanced intimacy of the camera. Doris Graber notes that the inexperienced politician is often unaware of the significance each facial expression and movement will have, and that in most instances they should take care to reduce their physical expressiveness. She also notes that the audience's experiences in watching television are largely based on entertainment. In those programmes, the audience is expected and, in fact, encouraged to "observe facial expressions for cues to a person's character and motivations". (Graber, 2001, p 76) Therefore they will often carry over this skill to non-entertainment programming, and inadvertently seek out meaning in the unconscious expressions of the performer.

Harrop and Miller quote Ranney in their assessment of the difference between stage and screen performance:

> "The auditorium situation calls for a commanding presence, a strong voice projected at high volume, large gestures, and dramatic punch lines with plenty of pauses for cheers. The TV-room situation calls for a pleasant and friendly presence, a moderate tone of voice, small and natural gestures, and a general conversational manner."
>
> (Ranney in Harrop & Miller, 1987, p 225)

Their reading of the information, however, suggests that they feel a new breed of politician is necessary to deal with this new medium, stating "television has changed the kind of politician who rises to the top". (Harrop & Miller, 1987, p 225) While the medium may have altered the expectations of the audience, it is not about creating a new standard for success, but rather adapting the standard to accommodate the new media.

The performer in the televised medium must be aware that the persona is not simply influenced by the elements of 'front', or even the words and actions of the performer. As Stuart Hall notes in *Television Times,* "...there is practically no unmediated or untransformed transmission on television...the images we see are constructions of or representations of the actual, not reality itself."(Hall in Cornen & Harvey, 1996, p 4) Television poses unique challenges to the political performer as it limits their ability to control the reception of their performance. The editing and angle of a televised piece can create an impression unlike that which the individual might have attempted to convey.

The deference that was once shown to political leaders by press and television journalists is no longer the norm. Television commentators and journalists take on a

more invasive and challenging attitude, if not in content than in visuals programming, towards the leaders it previously deferred to on every occasion. Now the television press are, in effect, the public's investigators, and while they still rely on the politicians for a steady diet of fresh information, they are also willing to put their own emphasis and interpretation on the images they record.

Political performers also find themselves somewhat dependent on the good will of the media to promote a positive view of their projected persona and their political agenda. Whereas in history, important government initiatives would be negotiated and announced within the government body, they are often now negotiated through public opinion, and announced to the broader audience through televised press conferences. No topic is beyond being addressed on camera. Though it may not serve the ideals of intricate debate, it certainly places more power in the area of public opinion. As a result the politician has to remain in something of a constant state of performance in order to maintain some control over the images that the public will eventually receive.

Perhaps as a result of this weakened position, various suggestions for the improvement of televised political communication have arisen, generally from politicians. Particularly during the early years of televised political campaigns, there was a great concern over whether the images would overtake the ideas of a campaign. Some would argue that the concern is valid, and is now a major roadblock to rational democracy. Others suggest that the concerns are largely indicative of the fact that little was understood about communicating through the new medium. In either case, some of the suggestions raise interesting questions regarding the nature of political performance and television.

In the 1960s, television executive and future vice presidential candidate Adlai Stevensen suggested that a weekly televised debate during the campaign period would "fulfill TV's political responsibility and end pressure on candidates to compete for air time." (Rubin, 1967, p 20) His suggestion was largely based on the argument that uninterrupted, detailed, serious debate on each of the major networks would not only ensure that much of the population be exposed to political information, but would end the often restrictive financial burden of purchasing US network airtime. He also believed that such extended exposure would decrease the tendency of televised campaigns to resort to condensed sound bites, slogans, and themes and help prevent the likelihood of voters choosing leadership based on personality. In short, he hoped that by standardizing the politician's television appearance, the need for television technique would be eliminated. (Rubin, 1967, p 20)

Even for the time, that is, not taking into consideration the 24 hour a day, multi-channel coverage that exists today, Stevensen's solution was simplistic. It displayed a serious lack of understanding of the semiotics and the nature of the medium. Regular appearances on television would not eliminate the need for the politician to 'entertain'; it would require the politician to do so, even in this regulated setting. The restrictions of the media remain the same. The increased intimacy of the camera would demand a certain restraint and a thoughtful performance. Slogans and assertions would not be rejected, but instead incorporated into longer debates as a means of instilling the idea into the minds of the visually stimulated audience. The nature of a transmitted debate still favours the more attractive, more controlled speaker. Lighting, editing and camera angle would affect viewer perceptions.

Stevenson also fails to resolve the question of who would mediate the supposedly unbiased debates; who would decide on the issues for discussion, or the format for presentation, and who would be responsible for camera direction and editing. All of these can have detrimental or positive effects on the audience's perception of a candidate.

For immediate examples of how limited this view is, one must only look to countries outside the US, such as Canada and the UK, that have regulated television time available to candidates and, usually, regular televised coverage of parliamentary debates, as opposed to the US preference for one-off leadership debates arranged specifically for television. (McNair, 1999, p 132) The candidates are no less competitive for the time and attention of the audience, nor are they any less reliant on the skills of the performer. Though the financial burden is greatly lifted from the campaign, the medium of television still exerts the same demands in both situations.

There are other significant differences between the performances of US leadership candidates and those of Canada and the UK. US political performers are not as often required to participate in house policy debates, and so are able to focus their skills more directly on their television performance. As Atkinson observed,

> "So long as British prime ministers have to be able to survive the rough and tumble of Commons debates, and especially Prime Minister's Question Time, it is unlikely that the job will ever be held by anyone who cannot hold his own as a reasonably accomplished orator. What is more likely is that political parties will increasingly select all-rounders to be their leaders - people who are capable of creating a good impression both as orators and as television performers."
>
> (Atkinson, 1994, p 178)

Note that Atkinson distinguishes between live public presentation and televised presentations by referring to them as separate activities. Though the two are linked from a performance perspective, his statement highlights the varied skills required of the politician in each format.

On a very basic level, television alters the viewer's perception simply by means of reproduction. As Miller writes, "If we did away with all the ads and newsmen...the [television] experience would still, necessarily, be mediated, and its impact ultimately slight."(Miller, 1988, p 157)

This can be seen in the cases of the American Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN), the Canadian Cable Parliamentary Affairs Channel (C-PAC), and Canadian Provincial House of Assembly Broadcasts. Each of these channels depicts uninterrupted government proceedings, without commentary or analysis. Stephen Frantzich writes that C-SPAN is "the unadorned event without the embellishment that 'putting on a show' implies". (Frantzich in Shultz, 2001, p 203) Yet in each case there are still significant gate keeping and interpretation issues that indicate the communication is not entirely without 'show'.

Lighting, room colour and room design must be altered to accommodate television cameras. Decisions must be made on what proceedings will receive coverage, as well as what shots and angles will be used. Where will the camera be positioned? Will empty seats be shown on camera? Will it focus on the speaker or the reaction of those listening? Will the shots be cut to show both, and if so, at what point? These and many other questions must be answered by those in charge of producing this supposedly

unaltered documentation of public affairs, and yet it is clear that the answer to any one of those could severely impact the audience's perception of events. Taking this into consideration, as well as the very fact of the politician's awareness of a potentially increased audience, and the concept of the unobtrusive 'fly-on-the-wall' coverage is no longer a simplistic possibility. As is observed in *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*, "the great instrument for conveying the simple truth can be subdued to uses of accepted faking."(Seldes in Kraus, 2000, p 13) In other words, the old axiom that the camera does not lie is not entirely correct. Although the images caught on camera may be irrefutable, the context of the footage can seriously alter interpretation. (Miller, 2001, p 31)

Roberts observes that in particular the "emotions of conflict", such as anger, jealousy, etc., are more intense and often given more credence through the televised image. The tendency of the television journalist to focus on specific details rather than a big picture, along with incautious editing, can inflame existing problems and isolate political leaders rather than bring them together. (Roberts, 1970, p 477)

Television does not reflect reality; it recreates it. Just as language provides a means of interpreting our reality, and of forming our understanding of it, so does television interpret and alter our perception of the world. As Fiske and Hartley write,

> "Language is the means by which the men enter into society to produce reality...Television extends this ability, and an understanding of the way in which television structures and presents its picture of reality can go a long way towards helping us to understand the way in which our society works."
>
> (Fiske & Hartley, 1988, p 17)

The nature of the medium also ensures that outside interference or technical difficulties can interrupt any communication. In a live performance, the politician is able to address any interference and adapt his or her performance to ensure that the communication is successful. The individual can speak louder if the amplification system is inadequate. It is possible to pause if there is an unexpected interruption or noise, or slow the speech and clarify language if the audience appears to have been confused. On television, the political performer runs the risk of being unable to correct a technical problem in the transfer of information.

Such problems could arise from a variety of sources. Rush labels unintentional interruption as "noise" and notes that there are two distinct types of noise that can influence the reception of a televised performance. The first type is "mechanical noise", which is physical in origin and often not present at the source of the communication. That is to say, mechanical noise usually occurs during transmission, and takes the form of poor reception, instrument damage, or disrupted signals. "Semantic noise", on the other hand, is largely the responsibility of the communicator. It relates to confusion in language, diction, accent, and other communication problems. Both mechanical and semantic noise ensures that the communication is improperly received, possibly misunderstood and that the communicator is initially unaware of the difficulty. (Rush, 1992, p 156)

While mechanical noise is a risk that every television performer must face, it is possible that performance skill could partially aid in the prevention of semantic noise. The performer who has perfected diction, tone and other vocal skills, and who is in command of their body language and behaviour will be less likely to inadvertently

confuse or distort their message. Without a live audience from which to gauge their performance, the untrained political performer will be at an even greater disadvantage.

Rush also identifies other, more intentional outside mediating factors that can distort or limit the information being presented. He calls these "gate keeping" factors, and they include the time constraints and the commercial interests of the television and radio media. In particular, the "...professional criteria applied in the selection of news" (Rush, 1992, p 158) can have an impact on how the political performer is seen, or indeed, if they are seen at all.

Denton and Woodward confirm that the primary goal in a television journalist's choice of subject matter is to ensure their audience is interested. The primary motivation for television journalism will be profit, and the selection of news stories will be consequently targeted to attract and hold the attention of the maximum number of viewers to any given programme. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 74)

In his discussion of US news media, Miller concludes that the news anchors and commentators do not follow a liberal or impartial agenda, as is often suggested, but a commercial one. They seek to attract audiences and therefore slant their coverage to suit what they believe the audiences wish to hear. Miller calls their approach "majoritarian" (Miller, 1988, p 101)

His sentiment is reiterated by McNair, who observed that,

> "The emphasis...is not on the media's support for a particular political party (bias or partisanship in the narrow

> sense) but the part they play in reinforcing and reproducing a generalised popular consensus about the inherent viability of the system as a whole."
>
> (McNair, 1999, p 62)

This does not mean that the journalists or media organizations are actively attempting to alter public perception (although in some instances that may indeed be the case), nor does it mean that they are reporting false information. It does mean that the direction of their approach is undermined by the nature of their medium. Individuals are of greater interest than institutions, and therefore the public personae of national political leaders are often given more coverage than their professional record. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 74)

Thus, a reliance on interpretation by a television commentator is not only an abdication of responsibility, but it is the placing of responsibility in the hands of a profit-driven organization. To paraphrase Marshall, the news broadcaster takes the symbolic position of representing the audience's interests. (Marshall, 1997, p 190) In practice, however, they second-guess those interests and subsequently alter the audience's perception of the information.

The authors also make the point that news stories are often patterned to follow the structure of classic drama. Each news segment must be a mini-drama, with all the elements thereof, including rising and falling action, conflict and resolution, and characterization. These elements can have a very definite effect on how information is presented, since they demand that each element of the story fit into a clearly defined archetype, and that the story be as self-contained as possible. The politician and their performance team must therefore adapt their scripts to suit such a pattern, and fit into

the format of the television news as much as possible if they wish to attract mainstream attention. The proliferation of the soundbite would indicate that many political performers are recognizing this requirement. Those who are unwilling to comply or uncertain as to how to begin risk being left out of the spotlight entirely. In a career so clearly dependant on media, being left out of its attention would not be beneficial.

As Postman observes, the standard for discourse in almost any situation has been changed by these gate keeping factors, as well as other restrictions and influences of the television form. Television as a form of communication has become so ingrained in Western society that it is rarely even distinguished as a specific form of mediation. (Postman, 1986, p 78-79) It has, however, dictated the way in which we now conduct both our public and private lives. Since television has been primarily a medium of entertainment, it has created a society familiar with and possibly expectant of a similar style of information delivery. Postman calls this style of communication the "peek-a-boo world" in which we are given brief, entertaining glimpses into various circumstances and situations, only to be immediately distracted by another such 'glimpse'. As the television's grip on the cognitive processes of our society increases, we see the already uninformative soundbite decrease dramatically in length. Therefore, not only is the information taken out of context, but it is usually incomplete as well.

Miller reiterates this point:

> "There is very little place for 'substance' - or, indeed, for any rational discourse - on TV...the medium is far too speedy, loud, disjunctive and sensational to permit even the resonance, much less the discussion, of a complex sentence, much less an idea. The heavy pressure of the advertisers, furthermore, forbids the airing of whatever issues might be either too depressing or too complicated...for the venue's

> crucial atmosphere of light festivity - a non-stop pseudo-carnival that can never slow down, or else someone might lose money."
>
> (Miller, 1998, p 92)

It is not the purpose of this essay to determine whether this state of affairs is either positive or negative. For our purposes, it is enough to recognise that it is generally a fact, and that the political performer must do their best to communicate within its structure.

If, in fact, there is a limit to the potential for sustained discourse, or exclusively rational argument on television, then the 'superficial' image or persona of the politician takes on a more important role in voter decisions. Just as Hochschild's airline hosts must display the company's policy in their clothing, appearance, and attitude as well as their conversation, the politician must condense the themes of their political ideology into their non verbal communication. Through television, western society has come to choose its leaders based on impressions of their persona and not just their political stance. Pu-Tsung King writes that even political scientists have come to consider a candidate's "image" (what I have identified as the persona) as a primary indicator of electoral outcome. He asserts that the academic political world has accepted that the voter is interpreting information on an image-oriented basis. (King in McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1997, p 29) The author does not go into detail as to why this is the case, but as the work of theorists such as Postman, Miller and Williams suggests, it has much to do with the media through which these candidates are presented. Naturally the voters respond better to images over ideas when they are presented through the medium of television, as television is a visual medium.

Denton and Woodward write that,

> "Even such aspects as candidate nervousness and ability to handle questions are noted. The focus of such stories is on the style of performance rather than issues discussed...The press is too concerned with reporting impressions of the debate and not concerned enough with the facts of the debate."
>
> (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 158)

Though this may be considered an unfortunate aspect of a visual democracy, it is also true that "on television, how one responds is as important as the content of the response". (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 57) Without a framework for understanding the nuances of that performance, the audience is left relying on the journalists to provide a frame and an interpretation of events. This not only covers how well the politicians performed, but also how their performance can be assigned political meaning. Miller writes,

> "Back when television was younger and more modest, it could approach the world with a certain self-effacement; the camera often showed events as if it were a mere onlooker, like ourselves. But now that this medium is older, more successful, and aware of its huge influence, it has itself become the story, half-creating whatever it purports to reveal and calling it 'news.'"
>
> (Miller, 1988, p 130)

As a result, the issues addressed even by print media regarding political elections and policy campaigns are increasingly little more than a further analysis of a televised event. In "The Lessons of Oprahland", Jonathan Alter analyses and offers projections about the televised performances that led up to the 2000 US presidential election. In his article, he discusses the performances of the two candidates while on popular US chat show *Oprah*, noting such details as, "Bush did well with Oprah; it helped that he leaned

forcefully into the camera (Gore leaned back, a bit haughtily)." (Alter, 2000, p 32) He also assesses Gore's appearance on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, noting that while the candidate "understood that 'Letterman' was a bad venue for proselytising", he still managed to give the impression that he would rather be addressing the key issues of his political platform, such as the Internet and global warming. (Alter, 2000, p 32)

This assessment alone provides valuable insight into both Gore's performance and the audience's interpretation of the political performer. It is possible to conclude that Gore did not perform effectively in the context of the television entertainment programme. Although his verbal communication contained material suitable to the medium, his preparation, like that of so many politicians, did not place adequate emphasis on the nonverbal aspect of his performance. While the content was given attention prior to the appearance, there was not enough attention placed on the actual performance.

Although Gore attempted to create an impression suited to the programme's audience, his verbal performance did not communicate the same information, and so the audience (in this case, Alter) did not see a confirmation of their current perception. As a result, Alter returned to his previous impressions of Gore as a stiff and uncomfortable speaker and Gore's history of being publicly associated with the passionate pursuit of liberal policy. In this way, Gore not only failed to accomplish what he had set out to do, but also redirected attention to the fact that he was behaving 'out of character', thus raising doubt as to his sincerity as a performer and his honesty as a politician.

As Alter writes,

> "Even when he's [Gore] good on TV, you can almost see him pulling the strings on his own back...he's a man of convictions who somehow makes people think he has none; a politician who acts more fake than he really his...Gore

> always seems to manage to make the hard right even harder.
> He's effortful when he should seem effortless..."
> (Alter, 2000, p 32)

The use of the word "seem" highlights the importance of appearances, particularly in the medium of television. It also highlights the fact that no mention is made of the issues that Gore *did* discuss, but instead lists only those points that were consistent with his previously established persona.

Although Gore's physical performance might have attracted negative attention, his physical *appearance* was, fortunately, an advantage. As a young, clean cut, stylish and relatively handsome man, Gore embodies one of the most fundamental requirements of the US television media: an attractive appearance.

It is a fact that in the visual medium of television, those individuals who are un-photogenic are at a disadvantage. Miller writes that the importance of television in US political communication has led the audience to overestimate the significance of a candidate's appearance, limiting the field of likely leaders to those who look as though he or she could be an anchor on a major news network. (Miller, 2001, p 32) Franklin writes, "Politicians must master the techniques necessary for the successful television presentation of policy and themselves. This may require changes to even the smallest details of a politician's appearance to make them more 'telegenic'." (Franklin, 1994, p 148)

Several writers have suggested that a wheelchair bound Franklin D Roosevelt would not have been elected 'on television'. Postman and Miller also point out that there are no photographs of Abraham Lincoln smiling. This, combined with the possibility that he

and his wife suffered from mental illness, were not detrimental to his election in the 19th century, but in the contemporary media would probably have cost him his political career. "What with those eyebrows and the funky clothes, Honest Abe would never be allowed into Dick Cheney's GOP..." (Miller, 2001, p 32)

Television accentuates the importance of appearance in the same way that it accentuates the more subtle movements and gestures, by focusing attention on it through the frame of the camera. The collective standards for the physical appearance of the political leader are largely established through popular culture and at present that usually refers to the standards of entertainment. These reflect the societal norms in each culture. The politician is reliant on the standards and expectations of their time. In the case of a contemporary society, nothing more clearly defines the collective imagination of appearance than the visual and mythological imagery of the film star.

Theoretically, the film star and the political performer share a unique similarity in their need to maintain both distance from and intimacy with the audience. (Marshall, 1997, p 228) There are, of course, more practical similarities as well. In Rossiter's fairly thorough listing of the US President's duties, he includes under the principal activities of Head of State that of "hero of the silver screen". He takes the point further in his analysis of the President's role as "spokesman for the real sentiment and purpose of the country." Such a statement recognises that both film and political performers are representative of their country's fondest ideals. (Marshall, 1997, p 9) Naturally the audience will seek out that ideal in all the public dealings with the individual, including their appearance and behaviour.

Though the film star has had some time to establish 'recognise-ability', it is only with the growth of radio and television there has been a vast increase in audience's recognition of, and consequently, the power of the voice and appearance of any individual President or Prime Minister. Just as audience members will recognise the image of their favourite film star, so will they now recognise their political leaders.

It is also true that in the cinema and other forms of visual narrative, the 'good guy' or hero is usually better looking than the villain. Physical attractiveness, particularly skin tone, physical shape and dress, is often associated with spiritual goodness and other favourable qualities, while the supposedly less attractive characters reflect unattractive behaviour. (Dyer, 1997) Of course, in reality this parallel is not predetermined. However, when the images of the real leaders are presented in the same medium and format of the idealised fictional characters, physical appearance can provide powerful emotional cues that may alter viewer perception.

Comparison with the screen idol is not limited to the US, but is particularly significant there considering the individual symbolic nature of the Presidency and the image of the ideal citizen pervasive in their cultural mythology. Denton and Woodward write "theatre and story-telling in general encourage explorations of linkages that connect specific personal qualities to public behaviours." (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 75) The fictional narrative informs audience perceptions of non-fictional activity. They also note that within the pervasive social narrative, the American individual is the source of all positive action. Therefore, "audiences would feel cheated if a victim of social injustice were saved by a slow-working agency carrying out the mandates of a new state law." (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 284) Instead, the image of the individual hero, or

the 'self-made man' helps to further draw attention to the persona of the leader as an individual, rather than as a product of a party, campaign or government. This reading offers insight into why some underdog political candidates, with little exposure or experience in national level government, can gain extensive media coverage and emerge as victors in presidential nominations and elections, beating long-term party leaders and recognised statesmen and women. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 102) Their individuality and their disassociation with institutional bureaucracy gives them that narrative edge that works so well within the context of television journalism. This was the case with former US presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, both of whom were governors of rural Southern states, with little experience in the national government. In both cases, their personal stories gained them political recognition, and as a result, their policies and plans became common knowledge.

Even in those instances it is simplistic to imagine that the assent to the presidency, or any accomplishments within the role, could be the sole result of their individual undertakings. Though an accomplished leader can be a motivating factor to change, it is not in the work of a single individual that great governmental change can occur. Nor is it necessarily true that the best, most qualified candidate for leader will also be the best looking. Yet, the television medium seems to demand that these elements regularly occur in sequence. While this would seem to imply that the range of potential leaders is therefore limited to young, attractive individuals, and that only the actions of individuals be credited with positive change, this is not entirely the case. Skilful adaptation and performance can generate some equality between candidates. Ronald Reagan was not a young man when he sought the US presidency and yet he used media-friendly performance to eliminate this disadvantage. On a surface level, he used cosmetics to

enhance his appearance, (Miller, 1988, p 86) but more importantly, he relied on his comfort with the media to attract positive images and response from the commentators. His performance ability eliminated any physical disadvantage, proving that knowledge of the medium and its requirements can allow for equal representation, in spite of its natural bias.

Ronald Reagan also tapped into the aforementioned cultural narrative in a unique and effective way. During his acting career he was, literally, a 'hero of the silver screen'. He played roles, particularly in the Western genre, that identified him as a 'lone wolf' hero. He successfully carried this association into his political career.

Although less directly associated with the film hero, George W. Bush also successfully tapped into the notion of the Western genre film character. His use of an affiliated 'front', including his use of language, his clothing, his accent, his movement and his appearance within an appropriate setting all identify him with the 'self made man', the hardworking cowboy, the dedicated rancher and other stereotypical images that are strongly imbedded in the US concept of the ideal. The affiliations with this image are so strong that this persona has overwhelmed other apparently contradictory biographical information.

On the flip side, there are many examples of leaders who were unable to compensate for the limitations of their appearance. In the 1970s Canadian Conservative party leader Robert Stanfield was considered an extremely effective leader, and with his political track record was expected to win an easy victory as Prime Minister. Unfortunately, his competition was Pierre Elliot Trudeau, a man who exhibited all the crucial elements of

persona that Stanfield did not. He was exciting, young, athletic, attractive and very telegenic. Stanfield, on the other hand, made no attempt to adapt his persona to the television medium. In a politically damaging move, he was filmed dropping a ball; an image that was taken as a metaphor for his campaign, and a stark contrast to Trudeau's well documented athletic achievements. (Antle, 2003, p B4) He lost three consecutive elections before stepping down as leader.

In *The Crisis of Public Communication,* the importance of the media is described in the following manner,

> "The structural root of the power of the mass media springs from their unique capacity to deliver to the politician an audience which, in size and composition, is unavailable to him by any other means. Indeed, the historical significance of the growing role of mass communication in political use lies, among other things, in the resulting enlargement of the receiver base to such an extent that previous barriers to audience involvement (e.g.: low level of education and weak political interest) have been largely overcome and the audience for political communication has become virtually coterminous with membership of society itself."
>
> (Blumer & Gurevitch, 1995, p 12)

The initial part of this statement is clear and generally agreed upon in popular discourse. The media derives much of its political power from its unique ability to reach a demographically diverse and numerically significant audience and to allow or disallow the politician the opportunity to use this medium to address that same audience. The second part of the statement is perhaps more open to interpretation, but can be read as a comment to the effect that mass media grants the politician an audience that would otherwise be inaccessible, not only geographically, but in terms of interest and intellectual ability. Mass media is consumed by those who would not necessarily have an active interest in political affairs to the extent that they would attend public meetings

or rallies. It reaches those who might not have an understanding of the complexities of policy debate, or who, because of their absence from certain social groups, might not be well informed as to political happenings.

Mass media distils the complicated political process and makes it accessible to the public at large, so much so that any active and 'normal' member of society would be exposed to some measure of political proceedings whether they actively sought it out or not. This type of opportunity is extremely important to the politician, and, arguably, to the audience. Whether or not the positive aspects of political mass media are agreed upon, it is certain that in order to be actively present in the eye of the storm, politicians must sharpen their performance skills to suit the nature of the communication tool.

It also means that the content of most political presentation must change in order to accommodate that tool. It is not necessarily easy or desirable for the politician to do this, but it has become absolutely necessary to political survival. Several political observers have conceded this point, often through simple comments such as those of Denton and Woodward when they write that, "Presidents should adapt to the medium of television through higher levels of intimacy and expressiveness." (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 57) This observation suggests an understanding of the need for adaptation between media, if not for the variety of skills needed to employ that understanding.

Unfortunately, this need is often unnoticed, or misunderstood. Many politicians seem to increase their physical movement, displaying a lack of understanding of the medium. It is often *less* expressiveness that is required of the politician when they are in front of the

camera. At a large rally, the politician may need to be extremely expressive, so as to communicate with the large audience. Such overt theatricality does not necessarily suit the more intimate and cool nature of the television.

Blumer and Gurevitch come close to this point when they write that politicians, "must adapt their messages to the demands of formats and genres devised inside such organizations and to their associated speech styles, story model and audience images."(Blumer & Gurevitch, 1995, p 33) It is not because of the media that performance is inherent in political communication, but it has certainly played a crucial role in increasing awareness of performance in political communication, and demanding what may be called 'professionalisation.'

Denton and Woodward suggest that consultants are needed to compensate for the nature of television media discussed above. Consultants help adapt the politician's script so that it suits the dramatic structure of television journalism. They also serve as advisors on such things as advertising purchases or content adaptation. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 102) They are, however, likely to be trained politically and not in the workings of performance. Their expertise is often learned through trial and error. Although the demands of media are obvious enough to warrant the attentions of a media advisor, most politicians have yet to recognise that their own performance is at least as important, and as manageable, as the script they hope to communicate. As has been established, the semiotics of the television media provides viewers with verbal information that influences their decisions regarding an individual or a situation. But how can these influences be understood and addressed by the political performer?

Baggaley, Ferguson and Brooks conducted studies in the psychological influences of various television images and found that techniques in editing, camera angle and lighting had at least as much or more influence as the performer's eye contact, style of speech, manner of dress and general performance. They also found that the untrained or inexperienced television performer was at a disadvantage when they attempted to communicate directly with the camera, but could compensate somewhat for their lack of skill or nervousness when they appeared in profile, or addressed an interviewer rather than the camera itself. When the individual attempts to address the camera directly, they run the risk of being considered unreliable and untrustworthy. (Baggaley, Ferguson & Brooks, 1980, p 28)

This finding is somewhat contrary to what conventional wisdom would suggest. Direct eye contact is often considered the most forthright means of communicating and establishing authority. On television, however, this direct approach can be perceived as overbearing and intense. In profile, the conversational nature of the medium is best captured. In similar experiments, Baggaley and Duck reported the same finding. (Baggaley & Duck in Baggaley, Ferguson & Brooks, 1980, p 28)

Both studies found that the visibility of notes, scripts or other visual aids on television had an adverse effect on the audience's perception of the speaker. In an experiment in which a lecture was taped on two cameras "placed side by side...while one camera framed the speaker centrally, the other framed him more to the left of the picture bringing into vision the sheet of notes on his knee" the viewers who saw the version with the notes made the assumption that any variation in eye contact was an attempt to refer to them, while viewers who did not see the notes considered the change in eye

contact to be a moment of "pensive deliberation". In each case, the audience was reportedly unaware of the influence the notes had on their attitudes. Their reactions were unconscious. (Baggaley, Ferguson & Brooks, 1980, p 24)

Eye contact plays a significant role in a performer's appearance on television, as suggested by the aforementioned experiments into usage of the profile shot. The research team found that the most effective performers were those who, when speaking directly to the camera, varied their eye contact with the camera. Even with those using an autocue or teleprompter, a performance that is too smooth or 'rash' tends to negate any appearance of expertise or trustworthiness. As mentioned previously, the direct gaze can be overwhelmingly intense. Without some variation in eye contact, the audience perceives tension in the speaker. The authors of the study suggest that in order to compensate the speaker should make subtle variations in eye movement, much like those one would use in a standard one on one social interaction. Eye movement that is too sudden or fast will make the speaker appear nervous or distracted and should therefore be avoided. (Baggaley, Ferguson & Brooks, 1980, p 68)

Some political communicators have recognised that television semiotics demand a more concentrated and encompassing means of message output. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher's conservative party hired "show-business entrepreneur" Harvey Thomas to design the stage and décor for the party convention (McNair, 1999, p 134). He brought to the process the understanding that television coverage of the event would last mere seconds, hardly allowing adequate time for thorough understanding of the policy debate. As well, as a focal point of the film shot, the stage set, would take on added significance. He designed the stage for the party leaders with the intention of distilling

the general party message into a format that was communicated visually as well as aurally.

The attention to the details of the stage was considered a "...search for 'purity' [of message]". Sets were therefore constructed with the same attention that any "West End stage set" might receive. (McNair, 1999, p 135) On television, it is even more important that the stage reflect the desired message or theme of the communication. The audience does not have the benefit of examining the entire spatial arrangement, as they would in a live setting. Nor do they have the time to make assessments or observe subtleties in the design. The average news clip lasts only 30 seconds, making it imperative that the message is given as directly as possible. In the theatre, the stage set is, of course, constructed not only as a backdrop to action but to support and emphasise the tone of the play and the intentions of the director. The set is generally intended to create significance for the audience, and therefore the audience is aware that the design of a show plays an important role in the interpretation of its content. As such it is rarely, if ever, considered a form of emotional manipulation. The designers of the political stage, much like political performers themselves, occasionally face accusations of manipulating the media and the audience, when really they are making proper use of the medium through which they are expected to communicate.

To better clarify the discrepancy between television's visual mandate and that of other, less image-oriented media, one might best review the televised debates between presidential candidates Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy in the 1960s. The debates were broadcast simultaneously over television and radio. Following the initial debate those who had heard the radio broadcast generally insisted that Nixon had surpassed

Kennedy in skill. His responses were recognised as dignified, thoughtful, and assured. Those who had seen the televised versions stated with equal certainty that Kennedy came out on top in the first round of debate. On television, Kennedy appeared honest, sincere, strong and trustworthy. (Franklin, 1994, p 149) This discrepancy can only be assigned to the very different requirements of the various media.

Kennedy was comfortable with the camera, was younger and better looking than Nixon, and had a general style more appropriate to televised performance (Atkinson, 1994, p 174). The contrast between the two could not be more profound.

> "...that night 'the Fighting Anti-Communist' - although he sounded fine on radio - looked like a neglected mental patient next to Kennedy, who seemed hale and masterful as his opponent looked awestruck and underfed...The spectral bumpkin glimpsed on CBS that night was Richard Nixon, at his most abject - the shabby, furtive Nixon facing his worst nightmare in the form of the resplendent Kennedy, who now towered over him, a glowing incarnation of the caste he had always hated more than anything."
>
> (Miller, 2001, p 39)

The variation in opinion between the television viewers and the radio listeners would have also been affected by the semiotics of the two different experiences. There is a distinct variation in an appropriate performance for a radio *vs.* a television audience. Radio is what Marshall McLuhan famously labelled a "hot" medium. (McLuhan, 1987, p 22) It is capable of transmitting impassioned dialogue without accentuating the formality and distance of such an address. It also draws attention to the actual language of the conversation and does not impose meaning on physical action or appearance. In a radio broadcast, Kennedy's more relaxed approach to speaking would have put him at a slight disadvantage.

This is a dilemma with which political performers are now consistently faced. A good television performance is often delivered at the expense of maintaining the passion appropriate to the smaller, live audience. "Passion...rarely registers on television except as something comical or suspect...crusaders, patriots, and revolutionaries all seem equally insane on television" (Miller, 1988, p 159) It is a problem that some contemporary leaders have made an effort to deal with by moderating live performances only slightly, so as to accommodate television cameras, and then compensating by giving more intimate interviews at a later time.

Although his television performance improved following that first encounter, Richard Nixon's loss to Kennedy can, in part, be attributed to his distinct lack of performance skills and misunderstanding of the nature of television media. Although his various attempts to appear on popular television programmes of the time and to engage with a younger audience seem to suggest that he was aware of the need for performance, his statements regarding political television performance also belie a lack of understanding: He later wrote that in order to perform well on camera, the politician should not appear following a full day of activity and that communication should be limited to a topic with which the individual is extremely well versed and competent. Also, he stated that the politician should be given no instruction, advice, or other information prior to the appearance. (Rubin, 1967, p 45)

The statement is a reflection of both historical context and a limited understanding of the nature of television. During Nixon's public career, political television appearances were more rigidly structured and limited to specific topics and interviews, therefore giving him and other politicians of the time more of an opportunity to prepare and

ensure that their appearance would be presented as they wished. However, even taking this into consideration, his comments also betray a misunderstanding of the immediacy of the television appearance. The notion that it should be reserved for topics of ease and comfort and that the appearances be scheduled away from busier times suggest that his interest in the medium was not as a primary communication tool. It was more of a chance to present oneself to the public, but not to have that presentation challenged. While his points may indeed be considered a good idea for the political performer, it is certainly an ideal that very few would be able to accomplish. Television cameras now appear almost anywhere that politicians are expected, including within the legislature, and it is usually in their busiest hours that they are expected to appear onscreen.

The "cool" medium of television demands that vocal technique, including diction and language, be softened. Those with poor vocal technique are best presented in front of a simple background, so that the visual performance will attract more attention than the voice. Likewise, the individual who is stronger vocally is best presented in front of a detailed set, as the visuals will detract attention from the speaker's behaviour. (Baggaley & Duck in Baggaley, Ferguson & Brooks, 1980, p 26) Baggaley, Ferguson and Brooks offered this surprising advice to the television producer based on their similar findings: "we may now suggest that he [the producer] take care to reduce visual detail in the presentation of a performer who is effective visually but poor vocally!"(Baggaley & Duck, 1980, p 74) Karlins and Abelson compiled research that comes to similar conclusions, noting that pleasantly distracting images could attract attention to the auditory appeal. (Karlins & Abelson, 1970, p 15)

As mentioned previously, performing on television often deprives the political leader of the ability to adapt his or her performance to accommodate audience response. Unlike theatre or live debate, the audience's reaction cannot be gauged directly. The television audience is not generally a direct participant in events, and due to the fact that viewing usually takes place in the individual's home, they are free to participate in other activities, leave the room at will, or even fall asleep while watching television. (Fiske & Hartley, 1988, p 109-112) Therefore market tests, often compiled before mass distribution, cannot really give an accurate representation of what audiences might experience while watching the same program in the comfort of their own home.

Communication via the medium of television has something of a disadvantage in terms of its persuasive ability. According to the findings of Karlins and Abelson, a persuasive appeal is more likely to be effective on an actively participating, live audience, than in the more passive reception of a mediated communication. (Karlins & Abelson, 1970, p 19) Television response is measured culturally more so than individually, and therefore the response dialogue again becomes a media one. Television has a unique place in our political conversation because it is also a form of public distance, despite the simulation of intimacy.

It is necessary to recognise that there are also advantages to televised political communication. The very fact that the influence of television is measured culturally gives it a potentially very focused and definite power, although that power may not be immediately evident. Reardon writes that although impossible to study, it is likely that the influence of a televised contact is as strong as that of inter-personal communication, although the results may only be evident over time. (Reardon, 1991, p 169) Particularly

in the US, where advertisements can be replayed without legal restrictions, the performer benefits from a regular repetition that is impossible through other media. As Karlins and Abelson observe, the effects of a persuasive appeal are more persistent if the message is repeated regularly. (Karlin & Abelson, 1970, p 19) In the world of the televised advertisement, repetition is standard practice. In the case of the political performer, the message can be said to be comprised of a combination of verbal and non verbal cues. The image presented, including the visual context of the televised piece, can contribute more to the repeated message than the verbal or written content.

As previously discussed, television also offers a much broader audience base than a live rally or gathering and has the added advantage of being broadcast to those who would perhaps not readily attend such a gathering. Television, through news programs, political specials, and other supposedly non-biased programming, has the ability to introduce a more diverse information base to a more diverse audience.

Taking all this into consideration, one could conclude that the most effective contemporary politician is one who can create a relaxed and confident persona which incorporates key elements of the campaign into the verbal action of the debate. They must use the performer's tools, such as costume, props, timing etc. to emphasise the elements they want their leadership to represent, and reduce the verbal content of their presentations to easily digestible phrases and repetitious themes. It seems a simplistic summary of such a complicated medium, but even phrased simply it requires the attention of the political team and the skills of the political performer.

Semiotics and the Political Performer

Once the performer assumes the persona and enters the performance area, all of his or her actions, however unconscious or unintentional, are interpreted as some sort of sign. Whether this sign is related to the content of the presentation, or is interpreted as what Elam calls "the actor's very reality", (Elam, 1980, p 9) it nonetheless assumes a far greater significance because the politician has been framed as a performer.

I have referenced the semiotics of different aspects of political communication. It is useful to recount the information used in relation to specific media in a more general attempt to understand the nature of how the politician and the audience communicate via a system of signs.

As Goffman writes,

> "It has been suggested that the performer can rely upon his audience to accept minor cues as a sign of something important about his performance. This convenient fact has an inconvenient implication. By virtue of the same sign-accepting tendency, the audience may misunderstand the meaning that a cue was designed to convey, or may read an embarrassing meaning into gestures or events that were accidental, inadvertent, or incidental and not meant by the performer to carry any meaning whatsoever."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 51)

The significance that the audience places on the various actions, behaviours and appearances of the performer will be informed, to a certain degree, by their expectations and experience in viewing other performances. As previously discussed, in ancient Greece, audiences would have understood the symbolic and expansive gestures performers used to ensure that their meaning was received across the large spaces. (Klaus, Gilbert & Field, 1994, p 12) Since performance has evolved along a more

naturalistic vein, aided by media, contemporary audiences expect a similarly naturalistic approach from their political performers as well. As the trends of performance evolve, so must the political performer.

The contemporary audience is not completely uninformed as to the semiotics of the performances they witness, on television and elsewhere. Members of the public, of all socio-economic classes, now have access to performance of all kinds on a scale that is historically unprecedented. This has had a tremendous effect on the very cognitive skills of our society. Exposure to regular mediated performance has given the audience a basis for understanding and interpreting what they see. As Atkinson writes, our ability to appreciate effective performance indicates that there is "...some kind of technical awareness of the methods underlying the production of an electrifying or tedious performance..." It is rare, however, for the audience to consciously question how they came by this awareness, or what role it plays in their decisions regarding a performer. (Atkinson, 1994, p 6)

The audience may use their semiotic experience to examine political performances, but do not necessarily question the sources of that experience. One must doubt whether the merits of live public debate are applied to a televised debate. In terms of presentations specific to the television medium, how many individuals are aware of whether or not the basis of their knowledge of good political performance is, to some degree, influenced by fictional representations and entertainment programming.

The television audience learns to process and understand, on various levels, the significance of camera movements, editing and other visual effects of television just as

they interpret the actions and behaviours of those characters that fill television screens. However, the audience is not always consciously aware that these elements are influencing their perception of the information being related. Currently, the audience watching a political performance is interpreting it with those tools of analysis learned from television, but without any adaptation for the nature of the political performance. They are still drawing upon their knowledge of the format; a format largely comprised of entertainment-oriented performances. In terms of political communication this format may be less than ideal, but as it exists and shows little sign of changing, it is indeed imperative that the sign system be accepted and understood.

There are certain signs that the audience will interpret regardless of the medium through which they are transmitted. Rothenbuhler identifies a basic frame that will be noted by the audience, often unconsciously. He observes that lexical variation, tone of voice, manner of dress, and the level or formality of distance from the audience are important indications of the entrance and exit of a social frame. "Such keys are reflexive symbols that both mark a boundary in social action and offer information about the other action within that boundary." (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 9) He also notes that in observing the performance, the audience is capable of making judgements on skill irrespective of context:

> "When the issue of displaying competence is taken as primary, the categories of ritual performance and artistic performance can merge. The cantor and the opera tenor can both be judged by the beauty of their singing, irrespective of the divergent natures of their texts, settings, and audiences."
> (Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 10)

Similarly, the politician and performer can both be judged on the quality of their performance. However, just as the message and form of the cantor differs from the message and form of the opera singer, the audience should be aware of how the skills of

the performer influence their perception of the information they are attempting to relate. An audience who is consciously aware of the importance of these factors may stand a better chance at understanding how their opinions are shaped. An audience who understands how to dissect a performance will be better able to judge quality of the speaker, and not just the content of the communication. Similarly, a regular theatre-goer can more easily identify the good actor from the bad, and not just a good character from a bad one. Bauman writes that performance requires "...the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence..." (Bauman in Rothenbuhler, 1998, p 9) Similarly, as Elam writes in his explanation of frame, convention and the role of the audience:

> "Performances can be properly understood only on the basis of a theatrical competence, more or less shared by performers and audiences, comprising a familiarity with the kinds of codes and sub-codes we have been discussing. But there is a more fundamental form of competence required before the spectator can begin to decode the text appropriately; the ability to recognise the performance *as such*... How do the participants in the theatrical transaction define their situation in such a way that, without resorting to explicit explanations, there is general agreement about the terms in which it is set up?"
>
> (Elam, 1980, p 87)

For the political performer and the audience they address, part of the problem is that there is no 'general agreement' regarding the provision and interpretation of performance. It is only in rare contexts, generally in situations that could be considered traditional modes of political conversation, that there exists a standard code or sign system that allows the prescribed audience to judge and interpret the performance accordingly.

In the UK and Canada, representatives in the Commons, or the higher houses of government, are still understood on the basis of their more traditional public 'oratory'.

In this situation, it is easier for the audience to interpret the performer as either good or bad, and 'grade' them on a variety of levels, including the content of their presentation. Most audience members who would regard this kind of performance have had some previous experience in watching, or in listening to a formal political debate, and therefore understand most of the conventions, systems and codes that are at work. Many of these still coincide with those of the professional performer, but in the traditional context appear non-threatening and 'natural'.

However, even in this traditional setting, the intrusion of contemporary media can create confusion in the audience. The television cameras that now bring the legislative debates into the lives of many who would otherwise never be exposed to democracy at work do not necessarily provide a history of traditions or an explanation of the benefits of certain actions. Question Period and other moments of heated debate spark constant discussion, interruption, applause and heckling from those in the House. This, from the television viewer's perspective, can appear childish, counter-productive, and unnecessarily aggressive in the cool medium of TV.

Indeed, both political and media observers have noted the confusion that can come from an unclear political message. In one study, Rush noted that outside the political system, where there are specific systems of interaction, political communication occurs through the same channels as the rest of society's communication and, therefore, is given the same level of attention and interpretation by the audience as any other social message. (Rush, 1992, p 160) Even educated viewers admit to being confused by the conflict between mediated reality and fictional constructions of reality. Noted cultural theorist Raymond Williams writes that even he was taken aback by the immediate cut between a

fictional program regarding the attempted assassination of a Prime Minister, and the televised address of a real Prime Minister.

> "It was a real shock, to be contained only by dividing one's experience and calling one part aesthetic or play, when an all too recognisable contemporary Prime Minister appeared on the screen shortly afterwards."
>
> (Williams, 1989, p 41)

Television coverage is, by its very nature, confusing, as it provides images that have been taken out of all history and context. The belief that television has created a world of instant information and irrefutable truth is far from accurate. It is this very pretence of absolute honesty that generates such confusion. It ensures that the audience does not go to any great lengths to evaluate the context of the images they see. They accept the images of television as factual and honest. (Miller, 1988, p 156)

On television and consequently in most visual media, there is little in the way of a generally recognised frame for the analysis of political performances. In many instances, the element of *necessary* performance is not even acknowledged.

As Elam noted, the ability to recognise performance *as such* is necessary before any further levels to the transfer of information can occur. This recognition has not yet been established between the political performer and the audience it addresses.

Perhaps this is why the media consider it necessary to provide 'interpreters', to comment upon political performances, as a means of compensating for the lack of consistent framework for viewing their realities. They essentially replace the 'frame'. Miller notes that a similar frame 'interpreter' exists in television news coverage of

conflict. The violence and aggression are not presented in their 'raw' format. They are processed and mediated by the journalistic frame. (Miller, 1988, p 157)

One can safely say that during political coverage those 'interpreters' are present primarily as a means of explaining and analysing the *performance* of the politician, since almost any review of a televised political panel or commentary (in Canada, the UK and the US) reveals that the topic of discussion is almost completely limited to the implications of the performance and not on the content of the address. Though content may be mentioned, in particular if it can be interpreted as having immediate or significant consequences for the audience, it is usually referred to in relation to the emotions or other performed actions of the political speaker. That is to say, the information is interpreted not of its own accord, but in relation to the imagery and performance that accompany its presentation.

This was noted during the Bush/Gore debates of 2000,

> "...the 'analysts' at CNN said not one word about the *substance* of the candidate's exchange, but just kept harping on the general 'statements' that the candidates were putatively 'trying' to make about themselves through their tone and body language."
>
> (Miller, 2001, p 98)

Miller quotes an exchange between two such commentators during a panel discussion of the Bush/Gore debates on October 22, 2000, as example of this dismissal of content. Stephanopoulos raises the point that George Bush had effectively avoided responding to an important policy question, only to be assured by fellow commentator Roberts, that it was not "...the important point." When asked why, Roberts responded with:

> "...that's not what comes across when you're watching the debate. What comes across when you're watching the debate is this guy from Washington doing Washington-speak."
> (Roberts in Miller, 2001, p 99)

The 'expert' commentators who willingly interpret the information (usually immediately following its 'live' on-air presentation) are therefore put in the dangerous position of deciding the merits of both the content and presentation itself. As witnessed in the studies of Baggaley and Duck, the exposure to authoritative or group opinion on the part of the television audience can have strong effects on its impression of events. Therefore the commentators have the potential to seriously sway public opinion. This is, of course, a means of information control, whether implemented intentionally or not. Miller writes that, "...all these telejournalists work in agreement, promoting a certain vision actively - even if obliquely - and thereby participating in the race which they purport to 'cover' from the sidelines." (Miller, 1998, p 100)

Journalists provide pre- and post-performance interpretation and seem to express a general disfavour for the practice of political performance, however, the focus of their dissatisfaction seems to avoid the cause and true nature of the process. Reardon writes that when a President makes an address, no matter how small or insignificant and no matter how well received, it will still be subject to the on-air analysis and interpretation of several television journalists. Reardon expresses great concern over this trend, stating

> "...Reporters who sit before the American public interpreting the presidents words without assistance from experts are far too enamoured of their own experience. In their failure to see their own limitations they become interpreters of American politics rather than reporters of it."
> (Reardon, 1991, p 203)

Reardon is correctly observing the increased role that political journalists have assigned themselves, but is missing a key aspect of the argument. Reardon's focus is on the wrongful interpretation of "the President's words". In the majority of instances, it is not the words that are the subject of such vast, if misdirected, analysis. The most prevalent topic of post-performance discussion involves the overall performance itself: the presentation, the setting, and the attitude of the performers. If any expert should be called in, it should therefore most appropriately be an expert in performance, semiotics, or non-verbal communication.

The semiotics of the television viewing experience are not something that many members of the audience have been taught to consider on a conscious level. Yet they can have a great impact on the viewer's perception of what is happening onscreen, as well as their interpretation of the information available through the image. As McNair writes, "...what the citizen experiences as political information is the product of several mediating processes which are more or less invisible to him or her." (McNair, 1999, p 25) In other words, the average audience member is not consciously aware of many of the mediated factors that inform a televised production. Yet, even without this information, there is clearly a learned ability to interpret televised information beyond understanding its mediated content. One can only conclude that, given the proper education as to the nature of the medium and its key players, the audience will increasingly develop its own political discourse.

The audience's means of interpretation are informed by the society that surrounds them, and the technology employed by that society. Just as Marshall traces the evolution of popular music through the evolution of technologies, (Marshall, 1997, p 155-58) so do

the authors of *Political Communication in America* trace the progression of US political oratory through the influence of various technologies. They note that prior to large scale industrialization, 'soap box' performances were commonplace and that political oratory, with a focus on philosophical or ideological elements, was perceived as a necessity for informing the public and conducting affairs. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 54)

The change toward "brevity and simplicity in public oratory..." (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 54) in the early 1900s coincided with the increase in industrial power in the US and "...the shift of the American hero from the politician to the businessman."(Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 55) The leaders of the business world were less interested in the poetry of skilled oratory and more interested in direct, functional communication. Consequently, political presentations decreased in length and formality, and seemed to shift emphasis from debate to statement. This has been described as the moment when "...political oratory became public speaking..."(Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 55)

Subsequent technological advances have influenced political performances more directly. Radio introduced the practice of speaking to a mass audience without direct interaction. It also led to an increased emphasis on intimacy between the speaker and the listener. The political performer skilled in the use of a radio microphone was, like the star 'crooners' of the time, able to create the impression of a quiet and direct conversation. (Marshall, 1997, p 156) This created a different relationship between the politician and the electorate. Listening to the radio did not require the same level of group interaction that attending a rally or political meeting would. Likewise, the vocal and physical requirements of communication through the radio were significantly more subdued than those employed in a group situation. The combination of a more natural

conversational vocal tone and the individual listening experience combined to create the impression of a more personal connection between the listener and the politician. Denton & Woodward keenly observed that radio shifted public attention from the powerful public oratory of the political leader to the 'calculated ease' of the professional performer. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 211)

In turn, television has had innumerable influences on political performance and its interpretation. Just as with radio, politicians have been forced to adapt to the new requirements and increased intimacy of the new medium, and to use the formula of performance to maintain attention and interest from the audience.

Carpini & Williams write,

> "...political attitudes and actions result from the interpretation of new information through the lenses of previously held assumptions and beliefs; and that these lenses are socially constructed from a range of shared cultural resources...this has always been the case and so to the extent that researchers have ignored or downplayed entertainment media, popular culture and so forth in the construction of both news and public opinion, we have missed a critical component of this process."
> (Carpini & Williams in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p161)

That 'component' has a lot to do with understanding how we interpret information. As the number of individuals raised in a largely visual era increases, so, too, does the importance of understanding the effects of this visual medium. The young adults of today are the first to have had a lifetime of exposure to visual media. As a result they are particularly skilled at extracting meaning from the visual image. (Graber in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 366)

For the contemporary politician, it stands to reason that one of their functions is to communicate meaning *through* pictures, usually via the medium of television. Without a clear understanding as to how to truly interpret the actions of the political performance, the audience turns to its collective memory of past or fictional impressions of leadership. As Doris Graber writes, "most messages contain signals that tap into the audience's stored schemas to augment the meanings conveyed explicitly." (Graber in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 71)

Unfortunately, this choice to operate within those conventions can create an additional problem: if the persona is the primary image in the minds of the audience, then the individual 'in person' may seem 'less than' or disappointing. As Marshall observed, "the technology of reproduction problematises authenticity." (Marshall, 1997, p 153) The idealised images seen on the screen and in print media cannot adequately reflect the un-performed individual, making the projected persona appear more 'sincere', on occasion, than the unperformed self.

The potential power of the contemporary media has not gone unnoticed by observers from all areas of society. McLuhan wrote that Plato's philosophy of the ideal city size, as determined by the number of people who could hear the voice of a public speaker, is thrown into question by the decentralised visibility facilitated by media. This observation led McLuhan to label the media saturated world a "global village." (McLuhan, 1987, p 307)

As the authors of *Television Times* observed, television is not only the contemporary principal means of public communication and an "agency of domestic entertainment",

it has also become "one of the main arteries of citizenship." (Cornen & Harvey, 1996, Introduction) In *Persuasion in Practice,* Reardon writes that "The mass media...are our most pervasive forms of communication."(Reardon, 1991, p 167) Compound these statements and we have a sense of the intensity and scale of the media in contemporary society. All aspects of culture have in some way been touched by media development, and perhaps none more so than the politician.

Denton & Woodward noted four primary means of political communication: the electronic media (including radio, television and the internet), print media (including newspapers, magazines and direct mail), display media (including billboards and placards) and personal contact (though this can include larger rallies and public appearances). When considered in terms of popular exposure, the total coverage of these media appears almost all encompassing.

The growth of the media has informed political communication to a degree that cannot be underestimated. On one hand, it is an increasingly accessible and powerful 'Fourth Estate' in liberal democracy (the first three being, as McNair describes, "the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of the state". (McNair, 1999, p 48) On the other hand, as Postman argues, this increasing prevalence has, in effect, made the TV commercial the central metaphor for political communication (Postman, 1986, p 129) (a concept originally contained to the US, but with increasing implications for other western cultures). It has also created a method of public discourse that is reliant not only on visual presentation, but on the very formula of entertainment.

The growing political reliance on communication with a television audience has also given rise to what Anthony King calls 'symbolic politics'. He defines this as "actions that purport to be instrumental but are in fact purely rhetorical...symbolic politics consists of speech making and public position taking in the absence of any real action..."(King, 1997, p 87)

In other words, politicians are unable or unwilling to risk lengthy and complex policy or issue debates with an electorate who are accustomed to 'sound bites' and problems that can be solved within the same framework of a half hour situation comedy. The politicians take major issues and, rather than look to long term solutions, seek to contain them in theoretical and philosophical terms. They are perfectly willing to draw attention and emotion to the issue, but are impotent in its resolution. By using the issue as a plot point in a realistically empty solution process, politicians find a place within the media friendly form, but they are, unfortunately, doing nothing to resolve the issue at hand.

Conclusion

The evolution of technology has had a profound effect on political communication and, as a result, the political performer. Instead of eliminating the need for political performance, increased consumption of technology has increased demand for it. It has also created new standards of performance, and demanded new skills on the part of the performer.

Political performers remain at a disadvantage in this area. This is due in part to a continued cultural reluctance to acknowledge that performance skills are needed by the politician. It is also due to the audience's misunderstanding of the nature of political

performance in many contexts. The advantages of mass media, particularly television, are many. It increases political awareness and provides an opportunity for a vast number of individuals to access political performance. Unfortunately, without proper understanding of the nature of political performance, media can also give false impressions, create unrealistic expectations, and change how information is processed and discussed. It is essential that the political performer understand the significance and the requirements of communication through media. It is equally important that the audience receiving that communication be aware of those same factors.

The next section further explores the audience's role in political performance.

Chapter 6 - Audience

The Audience and the Political Performer

Any study of performance is, in effect, also a study of audience. The actions of those on 'stage', or in any performance space, must be interpreted to be given value and meaning. For this interpretation to take place, there must be an audience. Examining how viewers and auditors absorb, interpret and understand that which is being played out for their benefit is a key factor in understanding the nature and needs of the performer. In political performance, this is a particularly necessary and complex activity.

As discussed previously, the unusual nature of the political performance makes it especially difficult to develop a model of interaction between the performer and the receiver. Political activity is expected to be of interest to a knowledgeable electorate, or Public. But performance is the domain of the audience. The line between active electorate and passive audience has been continually blurred, and as more political communication is designed along the lines of entertainment, the less likely it seems that the distinction will become clearer any time soon.

In political commentary of all kinds, the term 'audience' has come to be used in place of the more traditionally political terms 'public', 'electorate' or even 'mass', 'mob' and 'multitude'. (Bratich, 2005, p 249) This slight alteration of language would seem to suggest an ongoing, and perhaps unconscious debate as to whether or not the increase of mass media has created a society that is incapable of true political discourse, an

audience to be courted and won solely on the basis of visual and aural stimulation. In some instances, the debate goes unacknowledged, with authors using the term interchangeably with that of voter or public. Others seem to be making a more definite statement, as does Daniel Shea in his work *Campaign Craft*, wherein he refers to the voting population as the 'audience' throughout. (Shea, 1996, p 17-23) In either case, it is clear that the 'public' and the 'audience' are no longer to be considered two entirely separate entities. What was once referred to as the voting Public have, in description and perhaps in fact, become the Audience. Despite a general similarity in terms, this difference is a defining line of a democracy.

To understand its significance, it is necessary to identify a working definition of these sometimes problematic terms. To do so we must look briefly at how the original and contemporary meanings have developed.

Herbert Blau writes that, "...audiences, such as they are, are nothing like a public, certainly nothing like the capitalised Public of another time."(Blau, 1990, p 22) That "capitalised Public" he refers to is perhaps the ideal state envisioned by Greek and Roman philosophers in which the community, as a whole, is maintained by and for its own members, and each individual plays a significant role in its maintenance. The "audiences", however, as defined by the Collins Dictionary are "...A group of spectators or listeners..." or "...the people reached by a book, film, or radio or television programme." (Hanks, 1988, p 68) There is an interesting parallel with Plato's assertion that the ideal size of a community was determined by the number of people who could hear a public speaker at one time. Plato was inadvertently defining the ideal community by its status as an audience. And yet, his further descriptions of the ideal

community include an active citizenship. (McLuhan, 1964, p 307) The difference is subtle but significant. The public is expected to take some active interest in its own maintenance and growth, while the audience is not expected to offer action, just attention.

The authors of *Soundbite Culture,* who see the blurring between audience and public as a negative side effect of mass media, offer this description of the differences between these two entities,

> "... Audiences are talked to; publics are talked with. Audiences are entertained; publics are engaged. Audiences live in the moment; publics have both memory and dreams. Audiences have opinions, publics have thoughts."
> (Slayden & Whillock, 1999, p 7)

Blau describes the audience in the following way,

> "The audience...is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but is...precipitated by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed."
> (Blau, 1990, p 25)

A 'public', however, is joined by more than their attendance at or attention to a single performance and responsible for more than just the experience of that performance. While an audience is expected to do little more than observe and understand the performance before them, a public must also respond to that experience with appropriate action. A public is a community, bound together by activity and mutual concerns. An audience is joined together only by their mutual interest in, or presence at, a performance.

Carpini and Williams note that the term 'public' is no longer an adequate way to describe the complex levels of interaction that form contemporary political discourse:

"...people, politics, and the media are far more complex than this. Individuals are simultaneously citizens, consumers, audiences...and so forth."(Carpini & Williams in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 161)

P. David Marshall sees the audience as both a derivative of and a factor in the larger, more political popular body called the "masses". These masses define the population largely as an unorganised political power, while audiences emerge in relation to consumer products, as rationalised and therefore somewhat subdued categories within that scope. He notes that although the audience, in the twentieth century, has emerged as a "social category" of its own, it has developed as such in relation to both the unharnessed political power of the masses and the active political power of the public. (Marshall, 1997, p 61-70) The audience, then, can be said to be a separate but overlapping state that rationalises and segments the potential of the masses, but also informs the subsequent actions of the public. An audience without some degree of action or involvement is not a public.

In this sense, the perceived convergence of the audience over the electorate can be said to coincide with the rise of the consumer over the citizen. As several theorists, including Postman (1986), Marshall (1997), and Shultz (2000) attest, a signifying factor in contemporary citizenship has become consumption. The two theoretical entities consistently converge. As media of all kinds becomes increasingly competitive and market-driven, the method of presentation forces the audience to be construed as consumers, since it defines their interest and mandate as absorbing what is presented, rather than engaging with it.

Such a definition provides important insights into the debate from the perspective of political performance. The cohesiveness of the group that is to define the public can be undermined by mass media. It has been argued that mass media has removed all sense of local community and instead provided an information outlet that denies individual response. (Franklin, 1994, p 23) (Postman, 1986, p 67-69) It can certainly be argued that with media available on such an instant and individual basis, the necessity of group gathering for information and action has been greatly reduced. Thus, one of the primary functions of the public is eliminated, that of joining together for information. This lack of communal information gathering can eliminate the most important functions of the public: debate and personal action. Those who tune into national broadcasts or even read national newspapers to receive political information are generally not invited to debate and pose solutions to the problems that are introduced to them, or to take immediate steps to resolve the conflicts addressed. Instead, they are asked only to fulfill that traditional function of the audience, to receive the information and either absorb or dismiss it.

Media also blurs the audience/public divide by making it necessary to change the means of political communication. Previous to the advent of mass media, political communication was separated from entertainment imagery by its emphasis on rational debate and information. Television has led a turn toward more 'emotion' and image based campaigning both for an election and for support of a particular government agenda. This subsequently implies that this public has increasingly become *primarily* an audience.

Although this attitude is one that has been adopted by many critics and observers, it is not entirely correct to say that there are no longer any opportunities for the audience to regain their function as a public. On a local level, town hall meetings, public consultations and information sessions still exist and provide an opportunity for concerned citizens to voice their opinions and assist in forming local policy. Media, often accused of orchestrating the elimination of the active public, occasionally provides opportunities for more traditional public debate. During the Clinton/Bush presidential campaign, one of the three televised presidential debates was conducted as a 'town meeting' style forum. In the UK, both print media and television tend to offer opportunities for leaders to respond to the questions and concerns of individuals. Many newspapers, notably *The Times,* publish responses and letters from many different readers, allowing for public debate and interaction. (McNair, 1999, p 13) McNair cites the following as just one example of a burgeoning genre of TV programming:

> "In January 1997...Britain's ITV broadcast *Monarchy: The Nation Decides*. Advertised as the biggest live debate ever broadcast on British TV, the programme allowed 3000 citizens, egged on by a panel of pro- and anti-monarchy experts, to express their views on the past and present performance of the British monarchy, and its future role, in unprecedented critical terms, which both the British royal family, and any government responsible for stewarding the country's constitutional development, would have been foolish to ignore."
>
> (McNair, 1999, p 14)

Of course, the fact that this debate was televised also meant that the forum aspect of the process was limited to those present, while those watching in their homes still functioned in the role of television audience, further blurring the lines between the two entities.

In Canada, media, particularly radio, is often used as a forum for public debate and comment. The Canadian Broadcast Corporation's *Cross Country Check Up* and *Cross Talk* allows mediated debate between citizens across the country. Regional stations offer similar programming including VOCM's *Nightline, Talk Back* and *Open Line*. Provincial television news programmes often include 'person on the street' interviews on current issues and opportunities for the audience to voice their arguments on-air. For example, NTV poses a standard Question of the Week, and airs public response.

There are also indications that the political audience is creating its own means of participating in public discourse on a level beyond acceptance and dismissal. If the popular and prevailing attitude is of "media...as all-powerful and audiences as passive recipients", (Gamson, 1994, p 200) then at least there has been some theory and research to suggest otherwise.

Just as an audience can be responsible for the success of a theatre or television show based on attendance or viewing numbers, so too have public opinion polls been designed to measure only whether the audience accepts or dismisses what is presented to them through the media. There is little place for any measure of actual thought or opinion. When this balance is upset there is tremendous surprise, as was the case during the US Clinton/Lewinsky scandal. (Lawrence & Bennett, 2001, p 425) Stephanopoulos writes that after a full year of coverage of the Monica Lewinsky 'scandal', Clinton's public approval poll numbers were "higher than ever" while the Republican leaders who had initiated the inquiry were suffering from a serious lack of public support. (Stephanopoulos, 1999, p 442) Carpini and Williams also observed that public opinion polls taken during the media frenzy showed very little change of any kind, although the

movement that did occur was in the direction of increased support for Clinton. This was in direct contrast to what "...traditional agenda-setting, framing, and priming theory would predict." (Carpini & Williams in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 177) Zaller confirms that the expectation among news organizations, journalists, and political scientists was never realised; despite being cast by the media in a negative role, and despite the consumption of that negative media, the audience refused to judge the President solely on his framed persona. (Zaller in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 255)

This reality flies in the face of the traditional belief that mediated information is either accepted or dismissed by the audience, and in one sense proves that the audience has a greater capacity for analysis and opinion than was previously believed. It was clear that the majority of the population in the US, but also in the UK and Canada, were exposed to the information regarding the Clinton scandal. At the height of the scandal, it was almost unavoidable. (Zaller in Bennett & Entman, 2001, p 254) Therefore it cannot be said that the information the media provided was not being consumed. Rather, the audience did not agree with the media's attempts to persuade them, and communicated this through opinion polls, creating something resembling a mass political dialogue. As Lawrence & Bennett discuss in their article regarding the Lewinsky/Clinton public opinion "phenomenon", it should not be assumed by polling institutions or public opinion watchers that the projected angle of the media will be immediately adopted by the public. (Lawerence & Bennett, 2001, p 425) Although the media presented a preferred reading of the text, it could not ensure that the audience would interpret that meaning. (Hall in Curran, Gurevitch & Harris, 1977, p 343) The audience's decoding of the media's message would have to depend on each audience member's personal experiences and their impression of the media that was presenting the communication.

Stromer-Galley & Jamieson conducted studies indicating that subsequent to the Lewinsky scandal, 48 per cent of the American public attested to a belief that the media play a negative role in society; 46 per cent said that they trusted the media less than they did five years prior; and 79 per cent thought the media had altered or edited the facts to make a better story. (Stromer-Galley & Jamieson in Axford & Huggins, 2001, p 187)

> "...The effects are evident in the inability of the press to set the agenda on the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal or to prime it as a matter of importance in assessing Clinton's performance as president. From January 1998...to January 1999, in the wake of Clinton's impeachment by the House and trial in the Senate, public approval of Clinton's performance in office did not drop below 60. That finding is remarkable in the face of a consistent assumption by reporters for much of that time that the affair with Lewinsky and Clinton's cover-up of it would spell the end of his presidency with the public."
> (Stromer-Galley & Jamieson in Axford & Huggins, 2001, p 187)

The reasons for Clinton's continued popularity during the scandal have been discussed and theorised by political scientists and journalists. Everything from economic prosperity to political partisanship have been named as causes, the latter being a particularly far stretch, since the American political system is considered one of the least partisan in the world. (King, 1997, p 38) Almost all arguments can be dismissed by the fact that all Presidents, including Clinton himself, had previously suffered far greater fluctuations in public support, despite seeming prosperity and with far less media attention.

This kind of response is, in fact, encouraging. If the audience relies on the television newscaster to provide a frame and context to all political performance, then they are giving up their civic responsibility and placing complete authority in the hands of those actively involved in the process of communicating events. As noted, television has a

potentially vast opportunity to influence the perceptions of viewers. It should therefore be considered a civic responsibility to be well versed in the art of reading communication.

Gamson (1994) discusses the possibility that audiences are developing additional skills to decode the information that is presented to them. With the increase in 'backstage' reporting, the audience has become hyper-aware of the use of these strategies in communications. The audience is now using its knowledge to decipher information, as it is presented to them, for authenticity. As Gamson writes,

> "The image is decoded for a real or hidden meaning...rather than reading texts as either realistic or as endless images, they move in each case from disbelief toward belief...Knowledge about the production system provides a sort of road map and code key, making the travelling easier."
> (Gamson, 1994, p 164)

While there are cultural commentators who would rather lament the fact that the community driven public is largely in the past and focus their attention on finding ways to see the old methods of communication revived, others argue that the way to move forward is not to regret the existence of an audience, but to alter our ideas about how to understand it. "However much one might wish to do away with television and its demands, there is no question of turning back. This is our situation." (Gamson, 1994, p 191-192) In other words, it has been suggested that in order to become a more democratic society we must now "re-conceive audiences as citizens." (Golding in Ferguson, 1990, p 98)

Combs attempts to do just that, writing,

> "A political audience is often more complex than a stage audience, since it refers not only to those 'auditors' assembled to hear a political performance, but more broadly to the relevant public that constitutes a perceived and potential audience."
>
> (Combs, 1980, p 85)

And despite Blau's pronouncement that audiences are "nothing like a public", he later points out that there is still the possibility of unity even in the most diverse of audiences. "The presence of an audience is in itself a sign of coherence."(Blau, 1990, p 23)

In fact, it is possible that one of the fundamental faults in the ongoing question of the 'audience vs. public' is the assumption that the two definitions must be held up as opposites. Just as our discussion of the political performer does not imply that the politician need *only* perform, the contemporary political audience need not *only* be auditors to a show that unfolds before them.

As Rothenbuhler writes,

> "There is too much casualness in the use of the word spectator...A spectator is almost never simply looking at something. On the contrary, most forms of spectatorship are socially prescribed and performed roles and forms of communication...the spectator, then, is not simply a viewer but a participant in a larger system."
>
> (Rothenbuhler 1998:65)

It is naïve to say that we can regress to a time when audiences are reserved for the theatre and publics for civic matters. In a world that is so vastly based on communicating via the methods and media of entertainment, it is impossible to remove the role of the audience member from the role of citizen. This does not necessarily need to be a negative aspect of liberal democracy, but instead a step in its constant evolution.

There are, of course, positive aspects to the audience/public as well as potential negatives.

McNair equates the increase in audience with an increase in political knowledge and involvement, particularly for those on the margins of society who are unlikely to be exposed to national political activity in person. He notes that the advent of television may have limited political discourse to a media-friendly sound bite, but that it still increases the information dispensed to the majority of the population. Despite the ideals of democracy, the majority of the voting population is not extremely well informed as to political issues, and prior to the advent of mass media, were very unlikely to have an opportunity to become immersed in the details of policy. Television has increased the amount of political information the average citizen will be exposed to in their lifetime. (McNair, 1999, p 45)

With this in mind, it is possible to equate the faults of mass media not with its continued growth, but with society's inability to recognise the effects of the media as technology and to adjust education accordingly. While the quality of information and understanding regarding the actions and ideals of national political leaders may be disputed, the fact that they are more widely distributed than ever before is not. They have an audience at all times, and though that audience may receive information via a filtered medium, they are still present and active. As McNair notes, if the purpose of democracy is to increase the number of people participating in the political process, then mass media has clearly served to promote the democratic ideal. (McNair, 1999, p 210)

However, these positives are qualified by the fact that audience must also possess the skills, the interests and the knowledge of a public, or else risk a fourth-wall type isolation that limits their power to that of approval or disapproval, acceptance or dismissal. The need for an accountable, educated audience has not gone unnoticed throughout the history of mass media. Cultural observers such as Postman, McLuhan, John Kennedy, and even Pope Pius XII have cited the need for education in media. As McLuhan aptly noted, "To the student of media, it is difficult to explain the human indifference to the social effect of these radical forces."(McLuhan, 1987, p 304)

Pope Pius XII said, "...the future of modern society...depends in large part on the maintenance of an equilibrium between the strength of the techniques of communication and the capacity of the individuals own reactions."(Pope Pius XII in McLuhan, 1987, p 20) Those 'reactions' are informed by the individual's ability to interpret and understand the 'techniques' presented to them. They also depend on those who are attempting to communicate understanding the implications of the techniques they use. The education is therefore twofold: it requires that the communicator be aware of how his or her actions and images will be interpreted, and it requires that the audience understand the significance of the images and how they are presented onscreen.

John F. Kennedy was well known for his apparent comfort with the television medium and is often credited with creating the kind of performance conscious political leader that society has come to demand. However, Kennedy and his contemporaries, while at a disadvantage in terms of their unfamiliarity with the medium, had the advantage that, at the time, television was not given the same weight, culturally, as it is today. The televised press maintained a certain respect and distance from the serious political

leader. The candidate still had a measure of control over the interpretation of his persona. Kennedy still had the luxury of hoping that broadcasting would come to serve a greater informational purpose, other than an entertaining one. He acknowledged that both television and the politician were in the business of seeking public approval, and that, to some extent, their ability to accomplish their goals was dependent upon that approval. However, he also encouraged television journalists and political performers to ensure that this need for approval did not become the sole basis of their decision making process. To maintain their purpose even while adapting to the audience's needs.

It appears that Kennedy's high-minded view of both broadcasters and politicians seems to have fallen flat in our media-driven world. Opinion polls often decide how and where the politician's performances will be played. Audience rating systems determine what news stories will make the air, and how they will be presented. In the absence of a real understanding of the tools of communication, the practitioners have resorted to adapting their content to suit the audience. Since they are unlikely to risk the alteration of this practice, it falls to the audience to learn how to interpret that content.

In 1964, McLuhan wrote that, "Education will become recognised as civil defence against media fallout. The only medium for which our education now offers some civil defence is the print medium."(McLuhan, 1964, p 305) Unfortunately, it is only gradually and only at an advanced level of higher education that the study and analysis of media has developed to any degree. The mass audiences, those who control the powers of the public, remain formally uneducated as to the influence that the mediating factors of television have on the distribution of information. Although the *audience* may have developed an understanding of how to interpret the basic actions and images they

see onscreen, the *public* has not been taught how to translate this information into any real political or social understanding. The result, as Pope Pius suggested, is a community overtaken by the superficial manipulations of a medium. That is to say, any depth of analysis or understanding of content is limited to the most obvious of activities onscreen, and it is that lack of deep understanding, not performance itself, that is detrimental to political and cultural life.

Those in a position of communicating have only added to that confusion by being unclear as to whether or not they are attempting to address an audience or engage a public. In some instances, political performers and their teams focus their sole attention on the public, not taking into consideration the necessities of communicating with an audience, often to the detriment of political success. On the other hand, tele-journalists focus their attentions on attracting and maintaining an audience, often to the detriment of the political process. This confusion may be a symptom of the mixed messages regarding the appropriate attitude toward performance that is generated by western culture. In an environment where open attention to performance is both demanded and distained, communication choices can be difficult. Instead we are likely to blindly observe the steady increase in the entertainment style packaging of our national politics. Until the audience fully incorporates itself with the public, we will see an absence of action, and excess of confused consumption. (Kraus, 2000, p 18)

Political Performance and Political Celebrity

Earlier in the text, the political persona was compared to that of the film celebrity for its unusual balance of ritual intimacy and distance. In recent years, there is an even greater, almost boundless connection between the two, since both are now firmly within the

realm of the relatively new but pervasive general category of 'celebrity', largely a result of television media.

If it is necessary to communicate with the public as an audience, then it is necessary to understand the systems through which an audience identifies its symbols. Although celebrity can be studied as a commodity, a marketing tool, a cultural phenomenon, or any number of other distinctions, for our purposes, the celebrity system is a cultural text through which audiences and political performers communicate.

Though still a burgeoning area of serious academic consideration, celebrity studies has been given some consideration in recent years. As Gamson acknowledges, entertainment has been the primary basis for study of the celebrity (Gamson, 1994, p 5) but, not surprisingly, as the audience (which was also developed through entertainment) has come to encompass the public, so too has the celebrity culture pervaded other areas of society.

The inclusion of the politician in the general text of celebrity can be traced to the advent of popular mass media. But media coverage and visibility alone are not enough to qualify the politician as a celebrity. As Marshall notes, there are specific requirements and signs of celebrity that distance it from those who are simply well known, or accomplished individuals. One of the most significant elements that distinguishes a celebrity in this way is that they are well known outside of, or beyond their career or other categorical definition. Their actions, interest and concerns are discussed beyond the relevance to their field of work. In some cases, they are well known only for being well known - that is to say, they have not come to be respected or recognised for any

particular skill or achievement. (Gamson, 1994, p 1) The text of the celebrity extends beyond their working environment to their personal interests, behaviour, appearance and relationships, and includes any information that is circulated about them, including rumours, falsifications, and assumptions. (Gamson, 1994, p 187) These things are discussed (through media) and that discussion crosses outside the traditional context of the individual.

This inter-textuality is a key element in defining celebrity, and also points us to the fact that the rise of the political celebrity can be traced to, more specifically, the rise in interest of personal stories and behind the scenes, strategic accounts of political campaigns and activities, as opposed to detailed policy analysis. (Streich in Shultz, 2000, p 63) As the focus on publicity techniques and behind-the-scenes activity increased, so did the audience's scepticism of the final performance. (Gamson, 1994, p 38)

While the status of performer may be a requirement for all politicians, it is yet possible for the politician to avoid (at least for a while) the status of celebrity. There are still national level politicians who are known only for their work, or specific political affiliations and who have not yet become the subject of human interest columns or gossip. Ministers, senators, and congress people with lower profile portfolios or constituencies can avoid the personal spotlight of celebrity, if they are inclined to do so. As Marshall wrote, "...celebrity can be thought of as the general and encompassing term, whereas concepts of hero, star, and leader are more specific categories of the public individual..." (Marshall, 1997, p 7) However, many politicians with aspirations to advance their position will seek the personal publicity that leads to celebrity because

of the potential benefits of name recognition. Just as the politician must cloak himself or herself in the institution of leadership in order to take part in ritual communication, so must they now cloak themselves in the celebrity text so as to move between genres of communication, and thus compete for the attention of the audience.

Political journalism seems to have followed the trend of entertainment news focused on creating "celebrities" who can provide some sort of human interest link between varying situations. The celebrity text allows media to use the individual political performer as a context for any number of scenarios of national or political importance. Policy debates are often portrayed as struggles of individual will, or ambition. Significant government undertakings are described in relation to the persona of the leader. Even historical political actions are re-interpreted within the context of the celebrity politician who headed the leadership team. In *Faking It: The Sentimentalisation of Modern Society,* Mark Steyn writes that "Twenty years ago feminists coined the phrase, 'The personal is political'...Today, the political is all personal." (Steyn in Anderson & Mullen, 1998, p 178-79)

In *History of the 20th Century* this was described as the "personalization" of politics:

> "One of the main charges is that it [television] has 'personalized' politics. Political issues are usually too complicated for the average viewer to understand. It is technically impossible to treat them in adequate detail on television; and local matters can rarely be aired on the national networks. Consequently, it is argued that television focuses attention on the national leaders...Television therefore centralizes power...and gives a picture of politics as a gladiatorial contest between party chiefs whose images are packaged and foisted on the public..."
>
> (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1970, p 503)

Yet the demands upon the politician to embody the role of general celebrity increase. In order to gain extra screen time and therefore, the attention of the audience, politicians in several Western countries have appeared on programmes entirely devoted to entertainment. In the late 1950s, American senators began appearing on popular game shows. John F. Kennedy allowed his family to be the object of an episode of the popular American programme *Person to Person.* Even Richard Nixon, who was acknowledged to be uncomfortable with the televised medium, appeared on the variety/comedy series *Laugh-In.* (Miller, 1988, p 117)

By the time that television was established as a primary media in the 1970s, it was relatively standard for political leaders to appear within the boundaries of the entertainment industry. In the US, Former President Gerald Ford and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger both played roles on *Dynasty*. Former American Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill made a cameo on the US situation comedy, *Cheers.* Ronald Reagan's wife Nancy appeared in two popular 1980s situation comedies: *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *Punky Brewster.* (Postman, 1985, p 132) Continuing the trend into the 1990s, Bill Clinton made a cameo appearance in a 1997 US network Movie-Of-The-Week, (Steyn in Anderson & Mullen, 1998, p 176) former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani appeared on an episode of the sitcom *Seinfield* and it has become standard practice for national political leaders to make regular appearances on programs that were once reserved for stand-up comedians and movie stars, including *Late Night with David Letterman, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show.* Likewise, politicians like Bill and Hillary Clinton have been featured in entertainment celebrity magazines, like the US *People,* (Gamson, 1994, p 187) and are regularly discussed in entertainment tabloids, like the US *Enquirer* and *Star* or the UK's *Hello*

and *OK!*. Again, these political leaders were placed outside the realm of political performers, and into the more general world of the celebrity. Their distinction as a celebrity gives them a certain amount of flexibility within media, and can benefit them in their quest for media time and name recognition.

Marshall writes that,

> "...in contemporary culture there is a convergence in the source of power between the political leader and other forms of celebrity...the categorical distinction of forms of power is dissolving in favour of a unified system of celebrity status."
> (Marshall, 1997, p 19)

In the UK, it is not uncommon to see former political performers use their inter-textual flexibility on television as celebrity game show contestants, chat show panel members, or as presenters. They may also take part in Christmas pantomime and other stage productions. Some, like Edwina Currie, will take part in a variety of performance projects, largely unrelated to the work they did within the public service. Less frequently, incumbent leaders can also take on roles outside their immediate function, or even their country, as did Tony Blair when he made a cameo appearance on US animated series *The Simpsons* in 2003.

As Postman notes, this type of celebrity status

> "...frees politicians from the limited field of their expertise. Political figures may show up anywhere, at any time, doing anything, without being thought odd, presumptuous, or in any way out of place. Which is to say, they have become assimilated into the general television culture as celebrities."
> (Postman 1986: 132)

Postman contrasts this political celebrity culture with the specific example of Harry Truman, who, as President of the United States, was a very well known political figure, but could not be considered a celebrity since his appearances in public were limited to political affairs. His absence from television shows of the time was indicative of the separation between state affairs and entertainment. The attitude of the time is summed up in the following; "Politics and politicians had nothing to do with these shows, which people watched for amusement, not to familiarise themselves with political candidates and issues." (Postman, 1986, p 132) Truman did not have an inter-textual status with his audience.

While his distance from the media was viewed as distinguished at the time, it is unlikely that Truman could stage a serious national campaign in the 21st century without making the obligatory cross-textual, popular appearances. The political celebrity has become a political trap, demanding that the politician participate in the very activities that raise the suspicions of the audience and brand them as cynical performers.

The demand for the political celebrity indicates that its evolution is as much an issue of audience as it is performer. Though media may be responsible for creating the systems that promote cross-textual performance, the audience sustains the celebrity by consuming the product placed before them. The audience uses the celebrity system for a variety of purposes, from 'face value' data collection, to interpretive symbols of the issues they embody. (Gamson, 1994, p 147-148)

One of the ways in which Marshall proposes that these audiences promote the growth of celebrity is by seeking out individuals who fulfill their needs. These needs are, of

course, often subconscious, constantly changing and susceptible to influence from commercial endeavours and other peer groups. Nonetheless they provide the root source for the masses interest in an individual: one who can embody their needs.

In describing how readers develop affinity to literary characters, Hans Jauss developed a model that can also be read as applicable to the audience/celebrity relationship. He states five types of associations that the 'reader' (or in this case, audience member) might seek to find in a character (or celebrity persona).

1) Associative Identification: This refers to the appearance of active engagement, when the celebrity figure and the audience have a kind of perceived interaction. This can be the case with 'town-hall' style political meetings. (Jauss, 1982, p 155)

2) Admiring Identification: This is when the actions of the hero or celebrity have been perceived as exemplary and therefore worthy of respect and praise from the audience. (Jauss, 1982, p 166-68)

3) Sympathetic Identification: When the audience perceives empathy, or commonality with background, situation, or actions of the celebrity, a sympathetic identification is developed. (Jauss, 1982, p 172-73)

4) Cathartic Identification: Jauss describes this as the feeling of emancipation the reader experiences through his involvement with the character. In broader terms

of the celebrity, it can be understood as the fulfilment by proxy: the celebrity accomplishes what the audience aspires to accomplish. (Jauss, 1982, p 177)

5) Ironic Modality: This can be described as the maintenance of audience/celebrity interaction despite an absence of recognizable identification. This is evident in the case of political leaders who come from a background that does not provide a common ground for many of the audience members, and yet there is still some kind of identification. (Jauss, 1982, p 181)

The audience-seeking-identification theory is supported by several other theories as well as historical practice. In a study by the New York based research group The Project, researchers found that one of the most fundamental features in the success of a new relationship are the perceived similarities between individuals. (Lowndes, 1996, p 92-100) Politically, this perceived commonality is promoted by the individual performer and the performance team because of the potential response from the audience. However, they must be careful that this identification process does not become too intimate, therefore limiting the audience's ability to see the individual as worthy of continued support and praise. Thus, once again, the political performer must be wary of the double edged sword, they must establish a form of identification with the audience while still maintaining a certain measure of superiority. Gamson suggests that audiences use the 'backstage' information to "weed out" those who are only capable of technique and not real leadership. The "essential element of merit" is still a necessity. (Gamson, 1994, p 166)

In his discussion of film celebrities, Marshall describes a similar phenomenon as the myth of "democratic access". (Marshall, 1997, p 91) The perceived similarities between audience and celebrity give the impression that such a status is available to any member of the group, provided they are determined, hard-working and talented. Thus several principles of the capitalist democracy are promoted and upheld.

Of course, this "democratic access" is labelled a myth for a reason. The opportunity for any public figure (including the political leader) to rise to the status of celebrity without some measure of active pursuit supported by inter-media attention is entirely unlikely. It is, rather, the *perception* and performance of humility and equality that are of significant interest to the audience. For if, as Marshall says, "The relationship that the audience builds with the ...celebrity is configured through a tension between the possibility and impossibility of knowing the authentic individual" (Marshall, 1997, p 90), then that relationship relies on the performer's ability to balance their common ground with a presentation of aloofness and enigma.

The more comfortable the audience becomes with the nature of the celebrities they help to create and maintain, the less aware they are of how their influences allow the celebrity power. As previously mentioned, political celebrities now feel free to take part in non-political performances, in television game shows, situation comedies, and discussion panels, as well as trying their hand in other media and cultural events. As marketers attempt to cash in on name recognition and audiences become familiar with this consistent lack of celebrity context, this type of cross-over will increase. And the cross-over can move in both directions.

Celebrities of a non-political nature, in an environment in which all celebrities have almost equal public power, now are free to move into the political field, despite a lack of experience or previous interest in a political cause. Beyond the most recognisable example of Ronald Reagan (who did, in fact, have a long political history prior to his election as US President), the US has seen numerous film actors (including Clint Eastwood, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Warren Beatty), musicians (Sonny Bono), professional athletes (American football player Jesse Ventura), and tabloid chat show hosts (Jerry Springer) take part in state and national elections with some measure of success.

There are also celebrities who, although they have not run for office, have taken a distinctly political place in public discourse. For some time, the celebrity figure has been a symbol used in large scale political debate. For example, though known as an entertainer, Elvis Presley served as a symbol for politically charged discourse on race, sex, class, and authority. As his celebrity grew, so did his link to the political realm, resulting in the famous meeting with Richard Nixon. Also, contemporary pop musician Bono has established himself as a representative for third world debt relief on an international political level. Though outside his realm of expertise, he has had the opportunity to participate in high level, and highly visable political meetings.

In the preface to *It's Show Time: Media, Politics and Popular Culture* David Shultz describes these individuals as "inter-marketable" because they cross boundaries of expertise and context. (Shultz, 2000, preface)

In his analysis of Bourdieu, Marshall acknowledges that the individual biography of a celebrity (a feature that is often the focus of discourse about the reasons for a person's rise to fame) has less to do with their subsequent status than does the social context in which they flourish. In other words, it is the audience who create and sustain a celebrity, or at least the environment in which they can develop. To understand celebrity, he argues, the theorist and historian must dispense with traditional biographical approaches, and instead look at the cultural elements that promote the celebrity. (Marshall, 1997, p 19) It is akin to Rush's statement that political communication must take the same form as other social messages. (Rush, 1992, p 160)

In our contemporary world, it is not difficult to see how those social messages are being conveyed. The desire for 'backstage' information has reached a new height with the proliferation of 'reality' television. The current attitudes toward political celebrity can be seen as a reflection of the attitudes that surround the reality television genre.

Within this genre, the audience is purported to have access to all of the 'behind the scenes' intimacies of the participants' lives. That is to say, they are promised the opportunity to view the participant's un-performed self (although the knowledge that their actions could be viewed by an audience would likely lead to a whole other layer of performativity). The participants are inter-textual: in many instances they come to fame only through their appearance on the programme in question. In the cases where the participants are already celebrities (such as US programmes like *The Osbournes*, *The Anna Nicole Show*, *Cribs* and *Newlyweds,* and UK programmes such as *Celebrity Big Brother*, *Celebrity Survivor*, and *Celebrity Fat Club)* their textual status is expanded by their participation in a project unrelated to the field in which they first found

recognition. The participant's actions are supposedly unrehearsed and spontaneous, therefore hold the perception of unique 'sincerity'. The content of the programmes often centres on a system of gossip and a kind of constant shift from one minor scandal to the next.

The comparisons between television's approach to the political performer and their approach to reality TV have already begun to attract attention. Joe Klein suggests that during the Lewinsky inquiry, the Clinton family were unwittingly subjected to the same coverage that comprised the standard reality series. (Klein, 2003, p 40-41)

Television coverage of the political scandal, in a sense, predates reality TV in its intensely personal content and its coverage of an individual from a perspective other than their traditional occupation. The more that this form of message is shown, the more it seems to inform the programming choices of new media. At the same time, it is increasing the likelihood of the political performer becoming a political celebrity as well.

Conclusion

A key component in the understanding of political performance is the understanding of the audience. Although it was once a separate entity from the Public, we must now re-conceive audiences as encompassing both citizen and consumer functions. The various influences on audience interpretation, including cultural factors, media exposure, and education can impact the meaning of political performances. Both the audience and the performer should be aware of how this affects the democratic process.

And yet, there has been little in the way of formal education for interpreting or communicating through the significant cultural texts of performance. While this new conception of the audience/public can have both positive and negative repercussions, the lack of education surrounding political performance can create a somewhat negative environment in which neither performer nor audience is entirely comfortable.

The following chapter will highlight the necessity of political performance, and further explore the potential consequences that indicate a need for this form of communication to be studied in greater detail.

Chapter 7 - Consequences

Is Performance Necessary?

The theory and practice already discussed would indicate that there are present similarities between the professions that are worthy of more detailed analysis and could possibly have some benefit to the political performer. But at best this only proves that the politician has the opportunity to enhance communicative skills, and perhaps the likelihood of election or re-election. Before attempting to suggest an alternate approach to the development of performance skills, it is important to determine if performance is an actual *necessity* of political life. Thus far we have looked at the benefits of understanding the nature of political performance, but what are the specific advantages to the politician, the audience and to the electoral process?

The question can be addressed on several levels: philosophical, theoretical and practical. As a start, it is helpful to examine how the politician who chooses not to actively engage in performance manages in contemporary society.

The first observation we must make is that, according to the definitions set out by Goffman, Hochschild and several other theorists cited in this work, the very nature of their chosen careers would involve performance, whether undertaken consciously or not. Any politician, no matter how averse they may be to the pressures of performance, is interacting with an audience and attempting to influence that audience's decisions. They are also presenting a specific, focused view of themselves. They can therefore be said to be performing in some capacity.

We must be clear in our definition of the 'unperformed' politician. For our immediate purposes, we will examine those who are either unable or unwilling to acquire the heightened performance skills necessary to communicate effectively in one or more environments.

We can note that there has been a general observation from political theorists that those candidates who "focus only on issues" (Tomblin in Antle, 2003, p B4) or, in other words, exclude themselves from performance concerns, are less likely to be successful. As Reardon observes, "the candidate who says, 'I'll just be me and they'll vote in my favour' has a lot to learn about the influence of mass media on political discourse."(Reardon, 1991, p 208) Although there is a general voiced preference for the politician who is unconcerned with the presentation of a persona, the politician who does not adhere to the socially constructed methods of performance and communication will have difficultly communicating their goals and presenting their arguments effectively. There are numerous examples of 'unperformed' politicians assuming that their unwillingness to alter style for presentational purposes would serve in their favour, when in fact it worked against them.

One of the most insightful examples is the 1996 American Republican leadership campaign of self-made millionaire and well-respected businessman, Morry "The Grizz" Taylor. Michael Lewis' account traces the eventual decline of the Taylor campaign, noting the discrepancies between public perceptions of the ideal candidate and the realities of communication with an audience.

In the US, where campaign costs are borne largely by the individual candidate and can reach into the millions, one of the common reasons for questioning a candidate's perceived honesty is their dependency on the funding of political interest groups. Taylor's campaign for the US presidential nomination was entirely self-funded, as he believed that no candidate should be indebted to major corporations and pressure groups for funding. His platform was based on a practical and simple approach to taxation, budgeting and governing and he initiated an opinion poll that enabled the electorate to express their personal concerns and interests to him directly. He made numerous personal appearances, during which he refused to make use of a prepared script of any kind or follow standard protocol such as speaking from a platform. He preferred to interact with the audience more directly. (Lewis, 1997, p 28-31) His interactions with the media were 'unperformed' and he did not employ a single public relations aide. He essentially embodied all those things that the US public were supposedly convinced would make a good president, particularly in regard to the fact that he was perceived as totally 'sincere'. Yet before the campaign for the nomination ended, Morry Taylor was literally laughed out of the running. (Lewis, 1997, p 113) Polling showed that although his political ideology was extremely popular, he was unable to effectively communicate his ability to enact it. (Lewis, 1997, p 168) As Lewis observed,

> "We all have a fantasy, and it is profitably exploited by Hollywood, that if only an honest and genuinely free man with a heart of gold ran for President, everything in the world would be put right. Now we know what happens when an honest and genuinely free man with a heart of gold runs for President. He spends 6.5 million dollars and gets 7 thousand votes."
>
> (Lewis, 1997, p 115)

In this statement Lewis is acknowledging that the ideal image of the leader is at least partially determined by the prevalent social narrative and is often not applicable to reality. Though an audience will often state the preferences they feel they *should* have[3], they are no less susceptible to the realities of skilful communication.

A very different example is found in George Bush Sr.'s loss to Bill Clinton in the 1992 US presidential election. His loss has been attributed to his failure to adapt sufficiently to the medium of television, particularly in the interactive formats that Clinton excelled at, such as the more intimate 'town meeting' style of programme. In contrast to the relaxed and informal Clinton, Bush appeared distant, formal, and disinterested in the campaign process. Denton and Woodward write that Bush's inability to communicate in an informal 'town hall' debate format was of significant detriment to his overall campaign reception. That resistance to informality certainly would not have served him well on television, where most communication is expected to take on an intimacy and informality. He also seemed to have difficulty keeping up with changes in camera angles, and his lack of skill with this important part of television communication gave him a confused and disinterested appearance. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 157)

These did not simply influence the immediate post-debate response, but much of the commentary that circulated afterward. It certainly influenced how his subsequent appearances were received. Once a presidential candidate makes a performance error in a televised debate, his or her subsequent actions are measured against that response, putting them in a position of 'catch-up' that journalists and other political commentators will refer to regularly.

Occasionally, unperformed political leaders will be aware that their limited skills or interests in performance are to their disadvantage politically. Though this is generally commented upon in retrospect, it is possible to conclude that, in some instances, an awareness of their inability to perform influenced their approach to the system in general.

Following his defeat in the US Presidential election of 1984, Walter Mondale openly admitted that his inability to perform in a televised format contributed to his landslide loss.

> "Modern politics requires mastery of television...I've never warmed up to television, and it's never warmed up to me. By instinct and tradition, I don't like these things...I don't believe it's possible to run for president without the capacity to communicate every night."
>
> (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 162)

Mondale's comment is an interesting one. While it could be interpreted to mean that he never warmed up to the journalists or superficial requirements of the television medium, the context of the comment would suggest that it is the medium of television itself that caused him discomfort. Though he admits that he did not possess the performance skills necessary to run a successful national campaign, his comment implies a belief that such skills are natural gifts. He suggests that a politician is either an inherently gifted onscreen communicator, or is at a natural disadvantage. Although some individuals in both political and theatrical circles seem to have a natural skill and understanding of the art, it is by no means an area that cannot be aided with some technical training.

Mondale was probably right to suggest that his discomfort with the medium contributed to his loss, but it is unfortunate that he did not consider the possibility that it could be improved. Even if he was unable to become completely at ease with televised

performance, he could have at least learned some fundamental techniques to aid him in delivering his message effectively.

Another leader who never 'warmed up' to television was former Prime Minister John Major. Though he managed to meet with electoral success, his career was influenced by the fact that he exhibited little interest in the presentational aspects of public office. Major avoided photo-opportunities and publicity events, often to the detriment of public opinion. Jones writes that Major had an aversion to pre-arranged media events and often chose to avoid them altogether. Despite arrangements to restrict his participation, Major would still decline to take part in photo-opportunities and public appearances. (Jones, 1999, p 56) He was also extremely hesitant to make personal statements following incidents of a public nature, such as the Dunblane shootings and the death of Princess Diana, as he did not want to "exploit" these events for "political purposes". (Jones, 1999, p 57) He asserted he would never "succumb to the machinations of the image makers."(Franklin, 1994, p 150)

However noble his intentions may have been, the result in the media was a persona of silence, disinterest and alienation. Although he feared exploiting issues, he was, in fact, depriving his audience of a public response. Particularly in times of public loss, the politician must be prepared to take on their role in the ritual and perform as a representative of national sentiment. As Combs observes, "Participation in rituals of the political culture is...an obligatory scene for major political actors; non-participation would suggest disrespect for basic political values."(Combs, 1980, p 26) In forgoing this role, Major did not win the respect of the audience, but their distrust and resentment.

Such examples are only a sampling of the most well known cases of a politician's failure to appreciate the importance of performance. There are likely many other potential leadership candidates whose inability to communicate effectively prevented them from achieving any recognition in the public sphere. As noted, there is often a real resistance to the idea of adapting one's persona to the audience's needs. It is a resistance fostered by writers and journalists, who condemn performance and media savvy as a dishonest approach to communication. However, as Denton and Woodward observe,

> "While candidates and elected officials are frequently criticised for 'news management', it is equally true that candidates and elected officials who fail to manage the news are not likely to be candidates or elected officials very long."
> (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 134)

Despite the popular attitude that equates theatricality and performance in politics with deception and manipulation, the reality is that performance *is* a mandatory aspect of any social interaction, in particular, interaction on such a large scale. Leary notes that self-presentation and performance are not used exclusively by politicians for the purpose of gaining popular support. Any kind of interaction or communication requires performance. Whether in a large mass media presentation, or in an everyday meeting, performance takes place in all social interactions. He suggests that "although we find it easy to criticise politicians' tactical, self-presentational use of attitudes, we should remember that in many ways we are all intuitive politicians."(Leary, 1996, p 20)

What Leary is referring to is the element of performance, identified by Goffman, that is a cornerstone in human behaviour. Leary points out, however, that although we may all be intuitive in our attempts at public performance, the professional politician cannot rely solely on intuitive responses. Since politics can be said to be a social interaction on a larger scale, so too is the nature of its performance necessarily larger and more intricate.

Unfortunately, necessary but unacknowledged performance creates an environment in which the audience is encouraged to make decisions regarding a politician based on general, un-analysed impressions. Thus 'likeability' has become a significant part of the campaign. Or, more accurately, a likeable persona has, in some cases, apparently superseded an intellectual and competent one. Reardon writes that intelligence in a leader has become only of secondary interest to the voters. Their skills at "grabbing the hearts" of the population are far more indicative of their likelihood of election. (Reardon, 1991, p 203)

Communicating such intangibles as 'trust' and 'likeability' require more nuanced performances. Gloria Borger observed this in her 2000 article chronicling the build up to an important US presidential campaign address.

> "...George W. Bush may have an easier time of it than Al Gore. Not because he's a great - or even good - orator, but because the voters have already decided something important: They like him...They're less sure he's up to dealing with the complex problems confronting a president...What's worrisome, from Gore's vantage point, is this: In a speech, it's harder to persuade people to like you than to convince them you're not dumb."
>
> (Borger, 2000, p 26)

For any political performer, encompassing such themes as 'likeability' is a particularly difficult task, and one that does not define potential for leadership in every other area. For the unskilled political performer, it can be an almost insurmountable task. Instead of limiting the need for political performance, the increase in emotionally charged rhetoric and persona-oriented campaigns have demanded an even more sophisticated level of performance skill. If we cannot return to a point when the performances of politicians were only to enable the communication of information and intention, then perhaps we should be exhibiting greater understanding of the political performer.

The knowledge of the performance skills used in public communication gives the politician the option of learning about those skills and their professional application. The politician who is better trained in communication skills is therefore less concerned about public performance, and better able to be comfortable and flexible in these communication situations. It is also of significant strategic advantage, in arranging both election campaigns and policy promotions, to understand completely the nature of public communication. If the leader does not have a good grasp of the effects that an actual performance can have, then all the clever media strategies will be useless in comparison.

Audience responses to candidates such as "The Grizz" would indicate that there is some confusion over whether or not performance is a preferred approach to communication. Though popular consensus seems to indicate that a conscious performance is not preferred, voting patterns indicate that it is indeed a necessity. The formal education of the audience to the requirements of public communication would help to clarify the areas in which performance is mandatory, and answer questions as to why, thereby eliminating confusion and doubt about the sincerity of the practitioners.

As discussed, there are essentially two aspects to political performance, the first being the functional presentation of the persona, the second being the more elaborate and ritualistic performance of symbolic action. From the basic issues of self-presentation, to the larger contexts of ritual symbolism, it is clear that performance has a potentially large impact on the communication between the politician and audience (or audiences), that can include not only the voting constituents, but other members of government,

opposition, foreign and economic leaders, and media. One would therefore expect a certain amount of academic and journalistic attention, but it has not materialized.

The lack of attention to performance has even greater significance for the female politician. As will be explored in the next section, the women who embark upon a career in politics face even greater performance challenges than their male counterparts.

Performing Politics and Gender: The Female Political Performer

The majority of examples and cases studies within this research have been based on the experiences of male politicians. Ideally, the study of the political leader would be equally balanced between male and female and the analysis would not be influenced by gender. Unfortunately, this is not the case. To date, national level politics in the UK, Canada and the US have been marked by a significant male majority. There are many theories as to why this continues to be the case and would certainly comprise an entire thesis on its own. For our purposes, it makes equitable analysis difficult.

If male and female political leaders operated within the exact same boundaries, then an equitable gender analysis would be unnecessary: the same observations would apply evenly to both. For the most part, the observations within this study relating to the political performer affect both men and women equally. However, female political performers face several additional concerns that their male counterparts do not, concerns that have been largely ignored throughout political history.

Early literature on political oratory is clearly based on the belief that the art of politics is to be practiced by men alone. (Atkinson, 1994, p 111) As well, the foundations of

political theoretical literature discuss the female citizen as a point of contention, or else tend to avoid the topic altogether.

Plato discussed the female citizen as a potential political equal in the *Republic* and *Laws,* but he did so under the pretext that their more "feminine" qualities be eradicated. Essentially, he saw the equality of male and female as possible only if women replicated the skills, strengths, and attitudes of men, and let go of their claims on motherhood, sexuality, and other traditional female strengths. In other words, the male and female can only be considered politically equal if the female becomes a male. Or, as Coole writes, "...it is the functions and qualities associated with women, rather than men, which are to disappear...women's power is consequently demystified, rationalized."(Coole, 1993, p 25)

In Plato's ideal republic, equality does not exist through the sharing of power between the sexes, but by the assimilation of the female into the male. In other words..."Women themselves succeed only to the extent that they achieve this masculine status.".(Coole, 1993, p 25) It is unfortunate, but true, that the masculine-isation of the female political participant (or, the female in any position of power) remains a significant issue. The contemporary female political performer faces difficult decisions about whether or not they should develop and present a persona that requires them to compete *as men*, or to develop a feminine persona and risk stereotypical but still common criticisms of weakness and hypersensitivity.

While the all political performers must face the paradox of presenting themselves in an appropriately conscious, technically proficient manner and maintaining the unconscious

'sincerity' that is constantly demanded by the public, the female politician must additionally deal with another paradox; that of being "damned if they behave like men, and damned if they don't". (Atkinson, 1994, p 116) Atkinson writes that if a woman exhibits traditional leadership qualities, presenting a persona that is tough and decisive, then it is possible that her very femininity will be questioned. However, if she exhibits more traditionally female qualities, or behaves in a gentle, conciliatory manner, she is called unsuitable. (Atkinson, 1994, p 112)

The female politician who attempts to "adopt an inauthentic heritage" of strategy is likely to meet with resistance. (Rubin, 1997, p 7-8) Like any political performer, they must adapt their persona to the demands of the situation. Somehow her persona must project both the masculine and feminine ideals.

This forced duality is made particularly difficult in light of the fact that female politicians lack a traditional framework for presenting themselves as leaders. Not only are recognized women leaders historically few and far between, but the number of those who have achieved power through entirely political means (that is, who have not risen to power through marriage or dynastic relationships) is even fewer. Women do not have a consistent benchmark for mainstream political activity. As a result, female politicians have a particularly vested interest in performance. Not only do they have to establish themselves in the absence of a precedent, but they also face unique performance necessities that their male counterpart does not need to consider in such depth.

One of the most significant difficulties in this is the voice. Studies by Atkinson have noted that a lower, more resonant voice is considered a major benefit to a political

performer as "...high-pitched vocalizations tend to be strongly associated with emotional or irrational outbursts."(Atkinson, 1994, p 112) He notes that all political performers must be aware that vocal pitch tends to rise with nervousness or volume. Since women have a naturally higher starting pitch than men, any rise in that pitch can result in "...a level at which it [the voice] sounds excessively 'shrill'." (Atkinson, 1994, p 112) Therefore female political performers must pay particular attention to vocal techniques that develop range and volume, so as to create a more appealing sound.

The studies of Cantril and Allport support this idea. They studied the possible disadvantages of the female voice in public speaking. They concluded that the general public's preference for male voices is largely psychological and has much to do with pitch, noting that with women, "...contralto voices are greatly preferred for speaking." (Cantrill & Allport, 1971, p 137) However, they associate this preference with class structure as opposed to a learned discomfort with the female voice. They assert that a lower voice is more readily associated with a more effortless speech, while careful pronunciation and 'posh' accents tend to place the female voice higher in the register. Margaret Thatcher had an issue with both accent and tone, and worked with a voice tutor from the National Theatre to assist her in lowering the pitch of her voice and softening her upper class accent. (Franklin, 1994, p 149)

The female politician also faces greater scrutiny of her physical appearance. While the male politician is expected to physically embody the image of the idealised leader, the female is also compared to the image of the idealised woman. While this may not result in the expectation of a perfect outward appearance, it would require one that is at least sufficiently in keeping with the popular aesthetics of the day. It is easy to blame this

image consciousness on the patriarchal system of politics, but anecdotal evidence would suggest that it is the voters, particularly the female voters, who appear to be the most critical of fellow females. At the least, the very fact that the female political performer is in a minority increases her visibility, and therefore increases attention to the differences in her physical appearance. Also, the woman is more likely to be framed as an object of fashion than is the man. Television cameras tend to traditionally focus more on the whole body of the woman than on the face. (Lacey, 1998, p 67) It stands to reason that this increase in visual time would place additional emphasis on the wardrobe, body and the non-verbal communication of the female political performer.

The 'personalization' of political communication has meant that those in a position of leadership can expect probing into their personal lives. While both sexes are exposed to this scrutiny, there appears to be a double standard in the assessment of the personal lives of women. Personal history and behaviour takes on added emphasis and her 'role' in the home is often given far more importance. On one hand they are expected to exhibit the stereotypical female qualities and be maternal, attractive and gentle. However, they must also be intelligent, fiercely competitive and self-assured. While it is entirely possible that an individual could embody all of those elements, the opportunity to communicate them through performance poses difficulty. As previously discussed, the alteration of a communicated persona can call into question the 'sincerity' of the performer. In performing what are traditionally considered dichotomous characteristics, the female politician becomes subject to questions of 'sincerity'.

The female politician, therefore, must contend not only with the creation of a persona and the development of performance skills like her male counterpart, but with extra

effort needed in generating an appearance that both defies and embodies the feminine ideal. In other words, the things a woman might be praised for in some circumstances might also be the same things she will be condemned for in others.

Margaret Thatcher, for example, was continually expected to exhibit the attitudes of a man in governing and leading her party, for fear that she might be criticised for being weak or 'feminine'. However, she was regularly 'softened' by her political advisors. Her hairstyle and makeup were changed, so as to appear more gentle and feminine. Her speeches were written, with the assistance of playwright Ronald Millar, to reflect a feminine sensibility and to highlight that distinction. (Lacey, 1998, p 67) Her public appearances were balanced between those necessary as national leader, and those required of the female celebrity. (Cockerell, 1988, p 119) Occasionally, the gender issue was used to political advantage: during the height of the miners' strike, when she was attacked for being harsh and unfeeling, she appeared on television talk shows to discuss her personal life as wife and mother. (Cockerell, 1988, p 110)

In Canada, former Prime Minister Kim Campbell did not manage to balance her persona so successfully. During her first election as Prime Minister, Campbell led a party that launched an aggressive campaign against the Liberal opposition. The campaign included advertisements that attacked the appearance and speaking ability of then opposition leader Jean Chrétien, who had previously suffered a stroke. The campaign was not well received by the political audience and in both media and public discourse, Campbell was criticised for her excessively aggressive and 'masculine' approach to leading the party. When she later denounced any knowledge of the advertisements and expressed remorse over any damage it had caused to her party, she was criticised for

being too emotional and weak-willed to lead the party successfully. (Kinsella, 2001, p 39) Many of the terms traditionally associated with the 'hysterical female' stereotype were used to describe her response to the uproar. Though there were many external factors that added to the loss of that election, her inability to adequately balance the persona of leader and woman has been attributed to her personal loss of popularity. (See Kinsella 2001)

Many of the female political leaders the world has seen have developed their persona based on family associations. Though outside the limits of this study, they include the leaders of countries such as Israel, Pakistan, and Argentina. However, although many of those women ran for election individually, few sought to alter their existing persona in the eyes of the electorate. In the US, most women with political family attachments maintain their status through non-governmental work, without seeking individual election. They are therefore outside the study as well. However, Hillary Rodham Clinton provides a unique example of the female political persona in both traditional and electoral settings.

Rodham Clinton's political persona was developed as an adjunct to that of her husband, former President Bill Clinton. During his terms as Governor of Arkansas and later as President of the United States, Rodham Clinton had the opportunity to develop a persona concordant with the expectations and advancements of her time.

Initially, it appears that her persona was in fact a non-persona. Her public performances seemed based on a clear dismissal of the traditionally accepted symbols of political performance. As First Lady of Arkansas, she defied convention by maintaining her own

career while her husband was in office. She did not initially take his name following their marriage, and she did not make any conscious attempt to alter her appearance or dress while in the public eye. These attempts to avoid the development of a conscious persona actually contributed to the audience's perception of her as a 'non-traditional' woman and led to frequent criticism of the role that both she and her husband fulfilled in government. (Rodham Clinton, 2002, p 65-80) In the transition to the White House, Rodham Clinton clearly began to develop an understanding of the nature of political performance on a larger scale and adapted her persona gradually but accordingly. Her 'image' was softened and she began to dress more fashionably. She began to wear contact lenses instead of glasses and she appeared in the media in more 'traditional' women's roles, such as decorating the house and caring for her daughter. (Rodham Clinton, 2002, p 139-141) However, within this new persona she maintained her individuality. She did not replace her last name with her husband's, but added it to her own. She consented to give up her job during her husband's presidency, only to take a formal policy position in his government. In this way, she managed to find the balance between the 'traditional' feminine role and the 'masculine' leadership role that were both required of her. Though still occasionally attacked by media from both sides, she has managed to maintain this persona through her own successful election campaign for the US Senate. It is possible that since the audience has had such a prolonged and detailed exposure to the development of her persona, she was able to create an example of a national female leader that has not yet been experienced in US culture.

In everyday life, women are expected to make use of performance or 'emotion work' more often then men. (Hochschild, 1983, p 11) One would think that in a political world dominated by the emotion-based medium of television, the female politician would do

remarkably well. Such is not the case, for although the female might be better equipped to use emotion, they are also perpetually under scrutiny for it. As Hochschild points out, "...because the well-managed feeling has an outside resemblance to spontaneous feeling, it is possible to confuse the condition of being more easily affected by emotion with the action of wilfully managing emotion when the occasion calls for it."(Hochschild, 1983, p 165) Once again, the issue of 'sincerity' casts suspicion on the un-performed individual.

It seems that, in most instances, the issues raised in relation to the political performer have additional implications for the female political performer. This is an area that could certainly benefit from additional and specific research. Particularly as more women take part in national level political performance.

Performance as the Absent Centre of Political Study

By placing the politician in the context of the performer, it is clear that there are essential elements of performance that are of significant importance to the process of political communication. Unfortunately, it seems that performance is a topic that is generally overlooked by political commentators, and in some cases it would seem to be actively avoided. As discussed previously, there are authors who have addressed the issue of performance in politics briefly, but even they do not go into any great detail. Traditionally, references to political performance are restricted to the most obvious examples of ritual performance, the 'pomp and circumstance' of large scale ritual. The standard practice appears to be distinct avoidance of the subject altogether. Even in sociological studies of interpersonal performance, such as those of Goffman, there is an acknowledgement of the uses and forms of performance in communication, but no real

analysis of the processes and techniques that are employed in its use. (Hochschild, 2003, p 91)

While it may be understandable that performance theory and sociology have limited studies of performance techniques outside their traditional realm of reference, it is more difficult to understand how those devoted entirely to the study of political *communication* have consistently managed to avoid in-depth analysis of the skills and impact of the actual *communicator.* In other words, an area that attempts to understand the transmission of information has continually and almost completely overlooked the importance of the source of transmission.

Not only has performance been relatively ignored, but public leadership as a whole has been largely avoided by political scientists. Most academic analysis of public leadership is conducted biographically and is limited to a kind of post-mortem of individual accomplishment. Kellerman suggests that the neglect of such a major area of political study is, in part, due to the elusive nature of leadership. It is unlike any other institution in that it is inextricably influenced by the personality of the individual who inhabits it. It is difficult, therefore, to break down the study of leadership skills into general areas of concentration. (Kellerman, 1984, p 63)

Blumer also acknowledges that, in general, the public side of leadership is a neglected area of study, writing that although leadership is culturally acknowledged, it is "intellectually neglected" and as a result, there is a limited academic framework for analysing trends and advancements. (Blumer in Ferguson, 1990, p 101) Such a statement could easily be re-applied to the more specific area of political performance,

which would also benefit from a framed identification and would certainly provide a barrage of questions applicable to further research.

That is not to say, however, that there is no available information about this aspect of leadership. On the contrary, despite an apparent desire to avoid direct discussion of the political performer, indirectly there is constant reference to and analysis of various aspects of performance. Herein lies an interesting paradox, although some theorists seem to go out of their way to define the act of performing without drawing attention to its theatrical nature they must still address, indirectly, the performances involved in public communication. While the language of performance may be avoidable, the implications of performance are not.

Anderson & Mullen describe their perception of "gesture politics" as those that are employed "...not for effect but affect". (Anderson & Mullen, 1998, p 17-18) Postman refers to performance as "image politics" because of the importance of the visual message in televised communication. He writes, "...in a world of television and other visual media, 'political knowledge' means having pictures in your head more than having words."(Postman, 1986, p 130)

McNair describes a similar state of affairs, but instead prefers the term "performance politics", (McNair, 1999, p 210) noting that, "politics has become not only a persuasive art but a performance art, in which considerations of style, presentations are equal to, if not greater than, context and substance." (McNair, 1999, p 209) McNair is effectively pointing out what Postman had written of in some detail previously, that the use of media and performance in politics has affected how political conversation takes place.

Therefore "gesture politics" and "image politics" are both a part of "performance politics."

Between these various definitions there is a significant degree of division in attitude. McNair's definition gives the impression that performance politics need not consist solely of empty images. The real problem is not so much the use of symbols or performance, but the skills of the audience and the politician in understanding what is meant by those symbols.

In *The People's Voice*, Baskerville writes that the prevalent attitudes and values of an address are found in how the speaker communicates, not just in what he or she says. The total communication is comprised of "ideas and arguments", as well as speaking skill and audience reaction. Baskerville also notes that those same skills and methods of communication will have to change to suit the "public tastes and public needs." (Baskerville in Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 54) Denton and Woodward acknowledge that information is obtained through exposure to the entire communicative process, not just the explicitly stated information. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 47) In each instance the writers are avoiding the direct terminology of performance, while still encouraging analysis of the performance as a whole.

Even in Combs' study, *The Dimensions of Political Drama*, which attempts to delineate the dramatic aspects of political life, the specific terms of performance are not used. His work speaks of similarities between the two professions, but does not address how the 'real' skills and training of the performer are relevant in that arena. In fact, despite looking at the many similarities between theatre and politics, when it comes to

describing the political performer he refrains from using directly theatrical words and instead uses the more neutral phrase, "public style", that he defines as

> "... the manner or method of enacting or expressing a public character...such a style may be 'natural' or carefully cultivated but, in any case, communicates a distinctive public persona to the audience."
>
> (Combs, 1980, p 15)

This statement reinforces the fact that performance is a central, yet absent part of the political spectrum. Even in this discussion of politics as defined by theatre, the specific terms of acting and performing are avoided in favour of terms that imply otherwise developed skill. Combs notes that the "style may be 'natural' or carefully cultivated" but he does not go into detail about that cultivation. He does not address the question of exactly how the skills of the performer apply to the politician, nor does he question the possible implications that this 'style' may have on discourse, theory or realistic communication.

These observations are all somewhat obvious to any regular theatre-goer who has observed an actor making use of all available means in order to convey meaning or communicate emotion, and have readily interpreted those acts. What the aforementioned authors are referring to is the element of performance that the politician employs in order to communicate their own intentions. This is coupled with the fact that the audience is, on varying levels, able to interpret those actions, though they may be unaware that they are doing so. These authors, like others in political and media studies, hesitate over using any terms that might directly identify the political system with the theatrical one, yet they are drawing the same conclusions that any performer or knowledgeable theatre-goer would.

If anti-theatricalism started a trend toward avoiding performance in politics, then in recent years television seems to have contributed to that trend. There are several reasons for this continued and perhaps even heightened distrust of the political performer, all of varying and imprecise levels of importance. Superficially, the electronic form is accompanied by an increase in necessary and obvious adaptation and skill on the part of the politician and staff. Suddenly, the level of obviously pre-conceived, self-conscious performance preparation has increased and as a result so has the fear of those practices and the staff that enable them. Whereas the public speaker of the past need only step to the podium in preparation, the contemporary speaker must undergo make-up, lighting, sound and video preparation. They must wait for the cameras to be present and rolling, or else repeat their performance for the benefit of those cameras. There is altogether more surrounding activity to identify the politician with the performer than there ever has been. The various technologies and techniques of modern day communication require an increased level of attention from political leaders, who in turn rely on 'experts' to assist them in managing communication.

Blumer writes that the "would-be opinion moulders" must enlist professional assistance in preparing their campaigns in order to effectively attract limited news coverage. In order to be competitive, the politician must adapt to the specific demands of each journalist, news organization and medium; a task that requires full time attention and a range of specialist skills. To this end, professional "publicity advisors, public relations experts, campaign management consultants and the like..." have become a more direct and substantial component of a leadership campaign. (Blumer in Ferguson, 1990, p 104)

Fear of this professionalization can be traced to, primarily, a fear of manipulation. Distrust of a pre-planned and skilled performance in the political leader seems to stem from that same fear. However, since 'experts' directly related to the study of performance are rarely included in the list of professional advisors in the campaign or public relations team, the focus of this fear is directed at publicity strategists and other professional advisors. In the 1950s, with the growth of advertising strategy, there came a certain amount of public concern about the potential for manipulation, particularly on a subconscious or 'subliminal' level. In the 1990s to the present day, we see that same root concern being placed on the political strategist.

Yet, the necessity of outside help, particularly in media, is, unavoidable. As noted above, and as Denton and Woodward have observed, within a contemporary campaign the candidate relies on professional agents in advertising, issue research, polling and fundraising. In order to compete on what is now the standard scale, these functions must be fulfilled or, at least, directed by full-time trained professionals and not occasional volunteers. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 101) Of course, missing from his list is the fact that performance demanded of the politician in the media can be argued as a specialist task also demanding "...training, experience and knowledge of the industry."(Denton & Woodward , 1998, p 101) At the very least, one would expect that the attention to such professionally researched, polled, advertised, developed and funded activity would generate interest in how it is conveyed to the public, but consistently we see that it is not the case. Journalistic and academic interest remains focused on the backstage work rather than the final product.

Nicholas Jones' book, entitled *Sultans of Spin*, notes the increase in demand for skilled understanding of media, but once again the responsibility for adaptation is placed in the hands of a media relations officer. He writes that the expansion of media and the more restricted deadlines of the 24 hour coverage have raised the position of the press secretary to one of indispensable importance. (Jones, 1999, p 37) Yet, in describing the influence of the press secretary, Jones cites "...those highly visible moments when Blair makes a public appearance, conducts a news conference or is being harried in the street by reporters, photographers and television crews." (Jones, 1999, p 38) This is the time when the organization and planning is completed, and the most visible aspect of the communication falls to the performance skills of the individual politician.

Often those writing about the political performer will focus their attentions on this 'team' surrounding the individual leader: a publicity, or 'image' consultant, a press secretary or a political strategist. The role of the political strategist in political communication is often addressed in place of the performance itself, when such a study would be warranted. Both blame and praise are afforded to those who plan public appearances, scripts and advertising campaigns, with little assessment of the impact that the practical implementation of their ideas can have on the results. The excessive attention paid to their work detracts from, or perhaps even replaces, attention to the performance skills of the politician. It does, however, serve to increase public concern about political game-playing, or attempts at manipulation. (Norris, 2000, p 10) It therefore casts a negative shadow over *any* pre-meditated forms of communication, including prepared performances by the politician.

The consequences of media's interest in the 'backstage' story are not entirely negative. This type of personality based reporting is a good way of allowing the public to have a greater understanding of the requirements of high level politics and, more important to the media itself, it creates a more visual and digestible source of material than the policy reports and debate that make up much of political life. Unfortunately, it does not indicate how and why performance skills are used. Instead, it seems to indicate that the activities of communication are based on misleading or tricking the audience. This concern has been greatly enhanced by the exhaustive media attention paid to those individual political leaders who have misused their position and not to the surrounding government or other institutions that would have allowed them to continue their destructive 'backstage' behaviour. Thus the audience fears manipulation on the part of the individual, and concludes that all performances on the part of the politician will be cynical performances and an attempt at manipulation.

Pippa Norris observes that the increase in professional advertising in politics has often been blamed for the distrust of political leaders. However, she also points out that the attempts to control the dissemination of political information is not a new activity, it is only the coverage of the attempt which is new (Norris, 2000, p 10). In other words, politicians and their supporters have always made an effort to control and direct the audience's perceptions. The primary difference now is that the media is reporting the attempt as well as the results.

Denton and Woodward also note that "...synoptic reporting of politics frequently emphasises process over content...Such stories prime the viewer to look for the manipulative intentions behind a statement."(Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 30) The

fact that politicians must employ publicity assistants, or develop a persona to present to the public is, in itself, not a contemporary development. However, the attention has shifted from the results of this process to the process itself. With such scrutiny on the 'backstage' work, the actual performance appears to be put on the sideline.

Overlooking performance does not, however, appear to abate any concerns about its practice. The existence and importance of the strategy team does not eliminate a clear need for attention to the political persona and its presentation. Understanding how the team supports the performance is not an adequate replacement for analysis of the performance itself. The need for assistance in the area of public relations only highlights the fact that it is ultimately, and perhaps increasingly, the individual politician to whom the audience will look for information and confirmation of their opinions about his or her ability to govern. As McNair writes, despite the many interventions of public relations officials, it is still the responsibility of the politician to perform:

> "The conventions may be poorly executed, competently realised or creatively subverted...the political communicator is a performer, and will be judged by the audience, at least partly, on the quality of the performance."
>
> (McNair, 1999, p 37)

Although media consultants and advertising officials have altered the methods of the political communication world, effectively changing how the audience will seek and interpret information, their influence on the part of the performer has changed little. Performance remains the primary means of communicating information between audience and politician. While the audience will undoubtedly make value judgements regarding the type and effectiveness of advertising on a conscious level, what will keep or lose their attention and interest is the performance contained within its framework.

This importance is something which the advertisers and strategists, as well as academics and journalists, seem to spend little time considering, or else are determined that no one be made aware of their concerns in the area.

J.M Roberts asserts, "Politicians and statesmen have always recognised the importance of communication." (Roberts, 1970, p 477) Yet they have seemingly refused to recognise the central requirement of individual communication, that of performance. Exactly how and why this occurs is a matter of some complexity.

In his study of the public speaking habits of politicians, Atkinson observes that unbiased opinions of skilled political performers are exceptionally difficult to obtain. The difficulty with the biographical assessments of leadership mentioned above lies in the fact that there is a personal stake in any review. As he puts it,

> "...opponents may fear that to recognize technical excellence in one of their enemies will be mistaken as paying him a compliment, while supporters tend not to like the idea that the impact of their hero may be merely a result of technical skill."
>
> (Atkinson, 1994, p 88)

If this observation is correct, then analysing a leader's technical proficiency in performance becomes an exercise in avoiding bias. Although Atkinson's observations may offer some insight as to the hesitance towards public analysis of performance skill, it does not explain why even the use of performance terminology has become such a taboo. Though the anti-theatrical prejudice in general can be traced back to Plato's time, it is not in the overt discussion offered by him regarding performance, but only in its evolution as an undercurrent in society that it begins to have a serious influence on the political performer and the public. An unspoken taboo is far more detrimental to society

than an open debate. As long as the issue is a subject of academic and professional attention then at least its effects, both good and bad, are being addressed. In a media driven democracy, how is it possible to ignore the fact that advanced communication skills are required of public leaders? Why should that recognition produce such a negative reaction? Though several advances have been made in this area, partially due to the work of political communication specialists and sociologists, there is still a strong sentiment that performance is not a suitable topic of serious attention in the political arena. From the writings of cultural and political observers, one can deduce several theories as to why this Puritan influence still exists, and as to the detrimental effects it has on democratic discourse.

One such possibility is that the issue of performance is considered rather superficial. In a profession that demands attention to details of national importance, issues of self-presentation can seem vain and petty. As noted previously, even Shakespeare acknowledged that it is often necessary for the dissembling political candidate to appear disinterested in courting the public. Yet, this is just another aspect of their persona that requires performance. To avoid appearing self-centered or vain, the politician must carry out their necessary self-presentation with an air of disinterest. Once again the media journalists compound this issue by constantly demanding how the individual will accomplish the task of 'appearing' strong and capable, 'getting people to believe' that they are intelligent, or 'convincing the public' that they are well intentioned.[4] The press simultaneously call attention to the performance and dismiss it.

These elements of contemporary culture are compounded with the prevailing attitude fostered by the anti-theatrical prejudice, and together present a picture of why this

element of communication has continually been avoided. Though an obvious solution to this situation does not emerge, it seems clear that in order to advance the study of performance in politics, it is necessary to raise questions about the interpretation and analysis of performance that can at least initiate prolonged discussion and debate.

Sincerity, Authenticity and The Political Performance

A term that appears to have a significant place in the study of political performance is 'sincerity'. Webster's Dictionary defines the term as "genuine or honest". (Webster's Dictionary, 1989, p 295) Though its meaning appears simple enough, it has a complicated application in performance and, in particular, political performance.

To begin, it is once again useful to return to the works of Erving Goffman. He perceived that the audience member generally formulates their opinion of a performance on a two-option model: they make assessments based on the understanding that there is a "...sincere or honest performance" or a "...false one that thorough fabricators assemble for us, whether meant to be taken unseriously, as in the work of stage actors, or seriously as in the work of confidence men." (Goffman, 1959, p 70)

The question of 'sincerity' in performance is one that audiences and performance theorists have dealt with, in various forms, for many years. Any attempt to clarify the line between 'truth', or 'reality' and 'fiction' and the intentions behind them inevitably leads to more debate rather than clarification. Non-theatrical performance is no exception. In fact it has additional complexity because of the fear the audience may have of being manipulated or duped, and its implications outside a singular performance context. Both Goffman and Hochschild deal with the issue in some form, and their work

highlights the fact that in order to make good judgements on the performance and the performer, the audience must have an understanding of the context and experience in interpreting performance.

Goffman argues that the discovery of a projected self does not immediately mean that the projection is deceitful. He notes that the 'cynical' performer is not necessarily deceiving their audience for personal gain or pleasure. He observes that there are many instances in which "practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are sometimes forced to delude their customers because their customers show such a heartfelt demand for it." (Goffman, 1959, p 18) This is similar to Hochschild's assertion that the audience looks to the individual's performance as representative of the condition or state of the institution they represent. The expectations of the audience can be assumed by the performer, therefore making it obligatory for them to behave 'insincerely'.

For Goffman, the cynical performer is one who is defined by his awareness of performance, which in itself does not immediately imply deceit. The politician, like the flight attendant of Hochschild's study or the doctor in Goffman's, is not necessarily projecting a false or dishonest impression when they express an interest in assisting the public they serve. As Leary writes,

> "...although people sometimes present images of themselves that are not true, impression management usually involves accurate impression coloured by tactical changes in emphasis, tone and omission."
>
> (Leary, 1996, p 5)

Emotions, though not necessarily false, must still be projected through the filter of performance. It is a necessity both socially, and politically.

Hochschild's theories indicate that, in some instances, performing certain emotions can lead to a greater deepening of 'sincere' feeling. Hochschild uses the example of child psychologists, who are not only expected to *appear* concerned about their charges, but are in fact expected to actually find a way of caring about them. (Hochschild, 1983, p 51) This is less likely to be demanded in the national political sector, but the sentiment could be argued to have some validity. As Hunt discussed in *The Role of Leadership in the Construction of Reality*,

> "...representing the group or speaking for the organization in public will tend to increase involvement. Thus the greater the time and energy spent in a role enactment, the more the self comes to be defined by the role."
>
> (Hunt, 1984, p 173)

In other words, through the political necessity of drawing upon the emotions demanded by the electorate, such as dependability, strength and commitment, the individual may in fact find that these aspects of his or her personality take on greater importance to his or her personal beliefs. There are various approaches to this theory, primarily in performance theory, that question whether the assumption of emotion is a positive or negative result of emotional labour. However, the extent to which the politician becomes (and is perceived to be) more deeply connected to the position is not only dependant on personal performance, or emotional labour, but upon ability to align oneself with the institutional or historical expectations of leadership. For the politician, the presented persona is accentuated once the office is won by the association with the institution of leadership itself. The premiership of a country is both a ritual and symbol in and of itself, and the history and significance of assuming such a position can have both representational and personal consequences.

Yet, the politician's position on the performance scale between the actor and the con man would seem to suggest that the performance would be consistently perceived as false, or, at least to be perceived 'unseriously'. But how does the audience come to this conclusion? Goffman suggests that it is in the construction of the performance that the answer lies.

> "We tend to see real performances as something not purposely put together at all, being an unintentional product of the individual's unselfconscious response to the facts in his situation. And contrived performances we tend to see as something painstakingly pasted together, one false item on another, since there is no reality to which the items of behaviour could be a direct response."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 70)

Since few people will necessarily witness the preparation for a performance, their impressions of whether or not it is sincere will be dependant upon the 'believability' of the performance itself. If they witness a stimuli and an appropriate response, they may conclude that the performance is 'honest', even if the exchange had been rehearsed beforehand. If they perceive no appropriate stimuli, then they may assess a performance to be deceitful, although it may have been a spontaneous reaction. Likewise, if the indications of a managed performance are evident, the audience may feel they are being manipulated. The political performer would appear to have occasion to be considered in both categories, as it is possible that even an apparently honest reaction could be assessed as a false performance because of the politician's previous association with constructed appearances.

Goffman recognises the limits of this two-option model, and suggests that it is an ideology maintained by the 'true' performers, since it strengthens their position and inhibits excessive analysis of it. (Goffman, 1959, p 70)

The notion of 'sincerity' in appropriate response is often linked to the notion of 'spontaneity'. The perception of an appropriate response to an immediate stimulus is equated with a spontaneous reaction that, presumably by virtue of its immediacy, is in turn equated with increased sincerity. Several theorists suggest that the voiced preference for a 'spontaneous' reaction is in relation to its necessity as a communicative tool. The demand for 'true' emotion and the distaste for 'deep acting' could be generated by its very social necessity. Wikander calls this the "secularised cult of sincerity" (Wikander, 2002, p 197) and also notes that "...For the anti-theatricality and moralists...everything worthwhile lies outside the arena of representation, and moral responsibility inheres in attacking representations as false." (Wikander, 2002, p 196)

In other words, the very fact that controlled communication of emotion is expected makes it distasteful. The fact that 'deep acting' is required of those dealing with the public makes the public long for spontaneous emotion. "When spontaneity and sincerity are perceived as virtues, repetition and rehearsal appear as vices."(Wikander, 2002, p 196-97) Of course, Wikander's own wording groups spontaneity and sincerity together, and he does not attempt to distinguish one from the other.

Richard Dyer suggests that part of the lure of any celebrity is the audience's interest in seeking an 'authentic self', the other side of the prepared or performed appearances. (Marshall, 1997, p 17-18) In lieu of any other indicators of a non-public or 'authentic self', the audience draws its conclusions from what it perceives as spontaneous response. Barish suggests that the disavowal of prepared performance is, in fact, a form of 'self-disgust'. That we are restricted to a fate in which we are all performers and all audience members and, therefore, express a hatred when that state of being becomes too

apparent. (Barish, 1981, p 191) This view is concurrent with that of Hochschild, who writes that:

> "The high regard for 'natural feeling' then, may coincide with the culturally imposed need to develop the precise opposite - an instrumental stance toward feeling. We treat spontaneous feeling, for this reason, as if it were a scarce and precious; we raise it up as a virtue."
>
> (Hochschild, 1983, p 27)

However, should this spontaneous emotion be presented as a regular tool of communication, it would undoubtedly cause alarm and probably displeasure in the audience. As it has been found, despite the popular opinion expressed in polls and through the media that un-coached and 'natural' leaders would be preferred to career politicians, (King, 1997, p 56) those who win elections tend to be those who have the skills and the resources of the professional. (King, 1997, p 84) There is a definite "market for emotional labour." (Hochschild, 1983, p 91) but it is not a reality that we, as an audience, are comfortable accepting. As a result, the standard of the performance is raised.

This high standard of performance can make it appear as though spontaneity is preferable even on a presentational level. Atkinson observes,

> "...speakers who stick closely to a script are likely to sound less than fully spontaneous, passionate, impressive or sympathetic to the audience being addressed. By reading out a speech, a politician makes it quite clear that it was carefully prepared beforehand, that it would have been delivered to any audience that happened to be there at the time, and that it will be ploughed through from start to finish and without regard for whether or not it hold the attention of this particular audience. The well-known fact that professional politicians often employ speech writers also means that the use of a prepared script may raise doubts about the authorship of the speech. And to be suspected of merely mouthing someone else's words is certainly not the surest way of impressing an audience."
>
> (Atkinson, 1994, p 92)

It should first be noted that the problem Atkinson is describing is less related to the choice of a spontaneous performance over a prepared one, and more concerned with the performance skills of the speaker. His argument states that speaking from a carefully prepared script limits the speaker's ability to appear spontaneous, passionate, impressive, or sympathetic. Yet any professional actor is expected to take another's script and prepare, in advance, a performance that is all of those things, and more. Rarely, if ever, is an audience disappointed or surprised by the knowledge that the words are not arrived at spontaneously, or even that they belong to an outside author. Therefore it cannot be said that to present a prepared speech is necessarily a limit to the emotional capacity of the presentation.

Many skilled performers and public speakers can make a carefully constructed speech appear spontaneous. In fact, others, like Quintillian and recently Howard, suggest that it is only *with* preparation that a speaker can achieve the confidence and technique to appear truly spontaneous. Howard also indicates that within his own experience, the practice of preparing for a performance does not make those who are sincere in their passion any less so. (Howard, 2003, p 5, 20, 23, 170) Just as the audience watching a professional actor wants a truthful, but appropriate performance, so does the audience for the political performance demand sincerity and 'truthfulness'.

Just as the term 'spontaneous' is occasionally used to mean 'sincere', the term 'insincere' is sometimes substituted for the term 'cynical'. This is, perhaps, a more precise definition, since the term cynical does not necessarily imply an attempt at deception, but a consciousness of required action. Goffman writes that the difference between the perception of an honest performer and a deceitful one can rest in the

individual's own view of their actions. When a performer is fully 'taken in' by his or her performance, that is, he or she is not aware of the elements that they are withholding for presentational purposes, there is less likely to be a question of their sincerity. It is only when a performer is aware of the impression they are attempting to make that the performance is considered cynical. Goffman writes that the term 'sincere' is reserved for, "...individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance." (Goffman, 1959, p 18)

This definition points out that the 'sincere' individual is not necessarily any less aware of his or her performance, only that he or she 'believes' in the impression that is being purposely projected. What exactly that belief consists of is open for debate, although examples given by Goffman indicate that belief in performance is simply a more active manifestation of previously defined roles in society. The leader who is consciously projecting a persona is not necessarily any less of a 'believer' in his or her ability to be a successful leader. But out of this dichotomy comes the two primary stereotypes of the political leader: The 'cynical' leader who is interested only in power, and the 'sincere' leader enters into the role of public leader under duress.

In the context of performativity, some studies in gender shed light on this peculiar paradox. Geraldine Harris discusses the complex audience reaction to the performance of the character Dame Edna Everage. (Harris, 1999, p 58) Despite the fact that she is clearly a construction, and a careful performance, she is still seen not only as 'sincere' but as 'real'. Interviews, articles and other media discourse involve the character Dame Edna as the source, without mentioning Barry Humphries, the male actor performing the character. (Cruz, 2004, p 138) The perceived 'reality' of the character is further

confirmed by the fact that towards the end of the popular US television drama *Ally McBeal*, Dame Edna was hired to play a recurring role. Thus the character takes on a character, with its own separate background and nuances. This layering suggests that Dame Edna is seen as so complete an individual that she can take on a character without fear of being absorbed into it. This 'acknowledged performance/accepted reality' combination, embodied by Dame Edna, is the ideal for the political performer. They, too, strive to be seen as complete and sympathetic characters in a context of acknowledged performativity.

The public understanding of the cynical performer seems to vary with the media attitudes and interests. At various points in history it was believed that any kind of performance or pretence was considered blatantly hypocritical. Even political theorists seem uncertain of whether or not the work of the politician can be seen as 'sincere'. For example, the writings of political sociologist Irvine Schiffer acknowledge the positive and negative readings of political performer.

In one instance, Schiffer writes clearly in favour of the political performer, noting that it is the politician's responsibility to become a great actor and that doing so does not 'debase' the goals of the profession. He is clearly suggesting that political performance need not be considered negative. (Schiffer, 1973, p 48) Later in the same work, he associates the qualities of performance with those of the conman, or, in his words, the hoaxer, writing that by purposely developing a persona (or what he refers to as "an impression of himself that does not in fact fully coincide with reality") the individual is engaging in "cold-blooded misrepresentation". Though only paragraphs before Schiffer had seemingly accepted the fact that the political leader could be considered sincere, his

statement is still tainted with the common belief that such activities are inherently negative. (Schiffer, 1973, p 49)

This apparent contradiction in attitude is a clear indication of the paradox of the politician's performance responsibility. While it is generally acknowledged by both parties that the politician is performing in order to communicate, that performance is not always seen as a means of communication but often as an attempt at concealment.

The media exhibits a similarly flexible view on the sincerity of performance. As Miller notes, a certain amount of media savvy from one candidate can draw intense criticism, while another can receive praise for the same abilities. (Miller, 1988, p 104) In some instances, cynicism is considered appropriate, even wise, while in other contexts it is considered a negative quality. It can perhaps be attributed to the intention of the performer.

Goffman notes that not all 'cynical' performers are "...interested in deluding their audiences for gain." He points out that in many professions there are cynical performers "...whose audiences will not allow them to be sincere." (Goffman, 1959, p 15) That point is key to understanding the nature of political performance. Political communicators are regularly subject to the approval of a large audience of individuals, many of whom they must disappoint in the hope of long-term success. Particularly in the US, where direct democracy, or 'town-meeting' type government is still considered ideal, the politician is in some ways made to deceive the audience into believing that they are not career politicians with an interest in leadership, but an average citizen with a humble background and pure intentions. Clearly, the logistics of both political

campaigning and leadership would, by nature, demand that the individual have a focused ambition, financial security and limited familial obligations. In this instance, the audience does not allow the performer to be entirely sincere. They seem to approve only of the leader who embodies the skills and means of the professional and yet presents him or herself as otherwise.

Moreover, the politician is an individual who must continually adapt in order to survive, not just between media, but also to policy changes and attitude shifts as well. If they find that a particular approach to communication is failing, than they are expected to change that approach. They are told to soften or toughen their style, increase their attention on specific areas, and even physically alter their appearance. This adaptation is not necessarily a sign of insincerity, but simply a necessary process.

The politician is likely to be aware that their performance is not always a perfect model of reality. As a result, they may find it impossible not to shift between the cynical and the sincere: a situation that Goffman observes as almost impossible to avoid. He writes that those entering higher professions, particularly those in the public eye, often alternate between 'sincerity' and 'cynicism'. They might begin their careers with the intention of behaving in a purely 'spontaneous' manner, only to find that their audience requires a more structured performance. (Goffman, 1959, p 20) It is certainly likely that young politicians might begin their careers without anticipating the need for such constant performance. Their eventual move towards cynicism is not necessarily a desired choice. What unifies the sincere and the cynical individual is the mutual requirement of performance. Goffman writes that,

> "Whether an honest performer wishes to convey the truth or whether a dishonest performer wishes to convey a falsehood, both must take care to enliven their performances with appropriate expressions, exclude from their performances expressions that might discredit the impression being fostered, and take care lest the audience impute unintended meanings".
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 66)

In other words, from the perspective of political performance, the varied shifts in attitude toward performance matter little to the overall presentation of the political persona. It is the presentation that must remain consistent. Issues of cynicism or sincerity come into play only in the audience's perceptions of those attitudes. For no matter how sincere a politician's actions may be, if the audience does not interpret them as such, then they will be of no benefit to the individual or the public as a whole.

Of course, the audience's ability to determine a sincere political performance from a cynical one is largely based on their exposure to the representations of leadership that are also presented through the media, in fictional entertainment and through 'news' media. In this way, media acts as judge, jury and counsel at once, by creating a pervasive symbolic ideal through drama, and then preventing its real-life manifestation with the constant commentary of 'news' broadcasting.

As discussed previously, media attention on politicians is increasingly focused on the personal errors, both large and small, of a candidate or incumbent leader. In some instances, the focus of this media attention has been on serious inadequacies on the part of the individual. But in many cases, excessive coverage of relatively minor errors generates the impression that all those in political office are, in fact, actively attempting to hide their true cynicism and need only be exposed by the watchful eye of the media. Miller observes that although the trend has exposed a few truly devious leaders, the

majority of attention is paid to minor breeches in performance, of the kind that one might expect to read in "third-rate theater [sic] criticism". (Miller, 1988, p 86-7) There is little actual information found in these moments, but the sheer amount of coverage gives them a disproportionate significance.

It is interesting to note his comparison with theatrical criticism. This type of coverage is indeed like poor theatrical criticism in that it overlooks the more significant aspects of the overall performance and instead harps upon minor errors. The result that is a combination of the past follies on the part of national leaders, coupled with intensive media coverage of personal lives and inside campaign tactics have added to the increasingly popular view of the politician as cynical performer.

Another aspect of contemporary fear of the cynical political performance is the apparent belief that performance implies the presentation of an entirely contrived and fictional persona, and cannot include the conscious presentation of one's own 'essential self'. Of course, many performance theorists would reject this all-encompassing viewpoint. According to Barish (Barish, 1981, p 155) acting can consist of either feigning action or maintaining one's own course of action. Goffman's studies conclude that polarization of opinion regarding public performance deems that it is either entirely constructed and artificial, or that it is entirely unconscious. He remarks that in reality there is an in-between position, described in the following manner, "...while persons usually are what they appear to be, such appearances could still have been managed."(Goffman, 1959, p 71) This is particularly true of the political performance in an age of increasingly complex and 'professional' media attention. Performing oneself, or the role one has assumed for oneself, can require as much skill as assuming a foreign character, although

it often is acquired without much awareness on the part of the performer. Barish notes that it is even in performing or maintaining one's own image that the anti-theatrical prejudice, or disapproval comes to light. Those who are actively performing themselves often incur ridicule for 'misplaying themselves', or allowing visible discrepancies between their assumed character and the 'reality'. Note that it is not always the revelation of an alternate 'reality' or self that creates a negative response, but the inability or unwillingness to maintain the role that they have assumed or that society has given them.

This 'misplaying' can come from a negative source, such as one not fulfilling an obligation, or displaying bad behaviour in unusual circumstances, but it can also be the result of more positive sources, such as individuals attempting to reach beyond expectations and achieve more than is expected of them, or move beyond a social or economic class. Goffman writes, "Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way." This principle then implies that, in return, the individual who exhibits such characteristics will live up to the persona he or she has projected. (Goffman,1959, p 13)

This suggests that, should a projected image become tarnished, or proven even partially incorrect, then society will call into question all aspects of their previously defined assessment. Although the subject of a scandal may have nothing to do with the aspects of one's personality that are required to lead, the disproval of any aspect of the projected persona creates grounds for the dismissal of all of it.

This is compounded by the fact that the media are far less deferential to political leadership than they once were and the trend towards more aggressive and sensationalist journalism that focuses on exposing insincerity has altered how the leaders are presented to their audiences by the 'free' press. In some ways, this is can be argued to be a more democratic method, but it can also contribute to cynicism. Gamson writes that by continually focusing on the techniques of communication, the media feeds a cynical audience and creates an environment in which "political participation and the search for authentic voices are seen as ludicrous endeavours." (Gamson, 1994, p 192) Bealey writes that in cultures where the individual leader is lauded over the collective, issues of personal fitness attract excessive attention. (Bealey, 1988, p 234) I would add that any culture in which television is a primary conduit of information is a culture in which the individual attracts more attention than the collective. Rather than encouraging democratic engagement, this isolates the audience from the political leader, and puts them in a position wherein they feel they must constantly search each performance for a specific definition of authenticity.

Most democracies face a certain amount of moral commentary from the frame, that is, from the journalists who provide the pre-and post- presentation assessment of political performance. As mentioned previously, the Puritan influence promotes a moral-judgement approach to media. There are other influences, particularly that of the constant battle for the ratings, that contribute to what is finally presented to the public. It is significant to note that it contributes to the overall cynicism and distrust of the audience, and places emphasis in the 'contrast' between a political persona and the un-performed aspects of an individual's personality. The occasionally extreme attitudes expressed by the media can encourage the audience to view performances only in terms

of stereotypes. (Denton & Woodward, 1998, p 29) At the very least, an audience that has been predisposed towards unpleasantness is certainly more likely to doubt the intentions in any individual performance.

Also contributing to this heightened awareness of performance is the representation of the political performer in popular entertainment. It has been observed that as a society we have become adept at drawing meaning from images, particularly those constructed and packaged for the specific purpose of communicating information. It must be inferred that these skills alter our way of perceiving reality as well. A valuable question raised by Sardar and Davies is, "What are the links between the real and unreal images that shape our relations with the world we live in?"(Sardar & Davies, 2002, p 15) Tracey Gladstone-Sovell also conducts investigations of the representation of political leaders in popular culture. Much of Gladstone-Sovell's study is spent developing an argument for the analysis of political representations. This argument is largely based on a parallel between the politician and other groups who have concerns over representation that have already been legitimised. In so doing, she raises the following significant questions,

> "If we accept that scholars and public figures are justified in expressing concern about the content and messages of television programming, why would the portrayal of elected officials on television be exempt from this larger trend? If African-Americans and women are affected by negative stereotypes, if lawyers and physicians are unfairly and/or unrealistically portrayed, why would the treatment of elected officials be any different?"
>
> (Gladstone-Sovell in Shultz, 2000, p 119)

While it is certainly valuable to point out that the political occupation is no less susceptible to negative representation than any other, it is also true that in both cases it is impossible to state with any accuracy whether it is the representation that creates

cynicism in the audience, or the audience's experiences and existing cynicism that are reflected through popular entertainment. To attempt to do so is to engage in a 'chicken or the egg' type debate, with no real mechanism for establishing a satisfactory conclusion. It is my intention to take the approach that both arguments have some validity. While it is likely that the actions of some politicians, and the extensive coverage those actions receive, can create a distrust in the audience, it is unrealistic to believe that the extreme behaviours (both positive and negative) of fictional political portrayals can be an accurate reflection of the majority of elected officials.

The subject of the national leader is often used for the purposes of the entertainment industry. Particularly in the US, which appears to have a cultural fascination with the heroic 'lone wolf' image, the notion of the genuine, unselfish leader can have quite an emotional impact on its audience. In films and television the leader usually emerges as a self-interested, power-hungry liar (either laughable or dangerous), or the opposite: one who remains in government only to correct its many wrongs. Stephanie Greco Larson (Greco Larson in Shultz, 2000, p 109-111) places political representation into three primary categories:

1) The Sleazeball: The characters who are manipulative, self-serving, and in some instances, evil. These characters are often the villain of the piece and are usually embroiled in a sexual or financial scandal. Political characters in US television soap operas usually fall into this category, and it is also a popular representation in dramatic films, including *Bob Roberts* (1992), *Wag the Dog* (1997), and *Dave* (1993).

2) The Simpleton: These characters are generally bumbling idiots who have achieved power through the strength and intelligence of their staff, or through family or other connections. While these characters are often used as a catalyst for action, they rarely take a lead role. Instead, their absence from the forefront of action is, in its own way, symbolic of a disinterest in and separation from the real work of government. These characters are often used in comedic pieces, including US television programme *Spin City*.

3) The Saviour: Larson describes these characters as "either idealised fantasies of politicians or men who transform themselves into heroes during the course of the film...". (Larson, 2000, p 110) This could include the fictional incumbent President in Aaron Sorkin's *The American President* (1995), who, throughout the course of the film, turns from pragmatic diplomacy to almost reckless optimism. Likewise, the President in *The Contender* (2000), comes to a realization that he must do the right thing despite the potential political fall out. The candidate in *Bulworth* (1998) undergoes a total transformation from cynical and manipulative politician to a 'sincere' individual, unconcerned with what his audience may think. These somewhat simplistic changes can be compared to the more aggressive form of 'saviour' in *Air Force One* (1997). In this action film, the fictional US President single handedly fights off a plane full of violent terrorists and thereby ensures the safety of a plane full of passengers. In this case, there is added symbolism in the fact that the President is portrayed by Harrison Ford, an actor whose previous roles in *Star Wars* and the *Indiana Jones* series have established him as an action hero within the western cinematic canon.

Of course, in entertainment these archetypal roles are possible. There is a much more subtle line between those characteristics. Although most audience members will be consciously aware that the fictional incarnation is generally extreme, there is still a lasting impression. The fictional representation of the politician therefore provides a standard by which the audience will base their opinions of the actual leader.

The actual politician cannot hope to be as deified or as demonised as the characters in political drama. Though there may be a political leader as foolish and self-interested as the character in *Spin City*, it is very unlikely that those negative actions would be as blatant or as simply comedic as those depicted in the show. Rather it is more likely that they would be embroiled in activities far too complex or insidious to be fully explored on television. In his 2000 magazine article entitled "White House Hustle", Brian Johnson observes that "Neither Bush nor Gore will ever give a speech as inspiring as the one Jeff Bridges gave at the end of *The Contender*...and when it comes to White House integrity, who could ever compete with Martin Sheen on *The West Wing*?"(Johnson, 2000, p 70-3) In fact, history points out that should they try, they would be unlikely to receive praise or recognition for their efforts. They would more likely face political alienation and a subsequent loss of office.

As Anthony Wedgewood-Benn observed in 1968, if real political activity is communicated through the same context as the fictional equivalent, then it stands to reason that the audience would interpret the real events with the same eye as the fictional, therefore encouraging, if not a negative impression of the political performer, then at least an unrealistic one. (Wedgewood-Benn in Pinto-Duschninsky, 1970, p 503) If the standard of 'social characteristics' is being defined by fictional characters, the real

politician has little hope of ever completely living up to them. With the media actively seeking to expose their performance as cynicism (something fictional leaders rarely have to face), the politician is placed in an impossible position. They must deny performance and yet actively participate in it, hoping all the while that no one openly addresses that fact.

Fictional representations may help promote a stereotype of the corrupt and cynical performer, but the source for those representations must come from somewhere. Schiffer acknowledges this when he observes that the public demand that a political performer feign ignorance of performance, just as they insist on feigning ignorance of the fact that the politician is performing. (Schiffer, 1973, p 50) This is essentially the greatest challenge to studying political performance. In a sense all parties are aware of the performance that must take place, but they are also insisting that it be concealed. Instead of openly dealing with the complex requirements of contemporary political communication, requirements the audience itself demands, we collectively prefer to keep our "...participation in this political charade...disguised to a reasonable degree..." and focus not on our own bias and preferences, but on the external factors of political life. (Schiffer, 1973, p 50) This both satisfies and perpetuates our fear of performance and in so doing widens the rift between real understanding of political performance and emotional interpretations that could be detrimental to the democratic system.

It may be useful to consider the persona as a means of re-evaluating sincerity. The persona theory allows the acknowledgement of performance without the accompanying fear of manipulation and dishonesty. The politician, like the flight attendant of Hochschild's study, is not necessarily projecting a false or dishonest impression when

they express an interest in assisting the public they serve. Their un-performed selves, their emotions, ideas and intellect remain intact although projected through the filter of performance. This also allows for the fact that in some instances such performance leads to an even greater deepening of feeling. Hochschild uses the example of child psychologists, who are not only expected to appear concerned about their charges, but are in fact expected to actually find a way of caring about them. (Hochschild, 1983, p 51) The politician is no less likely to face the expectation of real empathy and affection, as well as an active response to their constituent's concerns, and in dealing with the people they are expected to assist, their attitudes and concerns could, occasionally, increase. (King, 1997, p 91)

Goffman's work also acknowledges that although the maintenance of a projected self is not necessarily a dishonest representation, any change in the projected self, no matter how minor, casts suspicion upon the whole truth of the persona. Therefore, if a persona is to be developed and performed it must be carefully maintained in order to avoid the appearance of inconsistency. As Goffman writes,

> "... It may be repeated that no claim is made that surreptitious communications are any more a reflection of the real reality than are the official communications with which they are inconsistent; the point is that the performer is typically involved in both, and this dual involvement must be carefully managed lest official projections be discredited."
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p 169)

The concern is not so much with the fact that the politician must perform, or with those who aid in that performance, but the continual concern that a politician's persona cannot be taken at 'face value'. Miller largely places the blame in the hands of television

journalists for this simultaneous disgust and demand for performance and general media savvy, writing,

> "The newsmen are adept at projecting...self-righteousness. In describing the spectacular political behaviours that they require, they act contemptuous, as if somehow above the tawdry antics that they themselves arrange for us, as hypocritical as pimps deploring fornication."
>
> (Miller, 1988, p 104)

It would stand to reason that those who prepare inadequately will be more likely to have a less than seamless performance. Therefore, when media actively address minor discrepancies in presentation or content and avoid engaging in discussions of large scale contradictions that are too complex for the medium, the result is a condemnation of the individual who perhaps best embodies the 'sincerity' and 'spontaneity' that they claim to support.

This problem is largely aggravated by the nature of television coverage and reception. On the stage, or in a live public appearance, minor details of speech and presentation are easily ignored, while major discrepancies have a greater chance of being challenged by the response of the public. Miller points out, for example, that during the 2000 American presidential election, serious discrepancies in George Bush's policy positions and political history were sometimes completely overlooked, while coverage of Al Gore's physicality, attitude and appearance were detailed and continual. (Miller, 2001, p 107) Miller's study goes on to examine the role that television had in diverting attention from these obvious truths while carefully reminding the reader that despite Bush's current position, his performances failed to win the trust and support of the people, leading to a majority vote against him. (Miller, 2002, p 107) [5]

We cannot end a discussion of sincerity without addressing the fact that there are instances in which performance can be used to deceive. If we recall the performance scale illustrated previously, we will also recall in the centre of that scale was the con-man. The con-man is placed there for a reason. The skills that contribute to positive communication can, in some instances, be used to manipulate and serve a self-interest. We have already examined the theories of such philosophers as Quintillian, who assert that those who attempt to use their skills for negative purposes will be destined to fail, and there are arguments and examples to support that theory. However, it is unavoidable that the skilled communicator will be likely to gain more attention than the unskilled, and should the skilled be motivated by self-interest, then the opportunity for manipulation is present, if only in the short term.

I would ultimately respond to this argument by stating that performance, like language, is a tool of communication. There are individuals particularly skilled in language, who would use that skill to manipulate the perceptions of others, but it is unlikely that anyone would suggest the complete abandonment of the study of languages. That is not to suggest that either form of communication is a benign force. Only to point out that in any instance, we must be prepared to make individual assessments, and not sweeping generalizations.

As well, the threat of manipulation can only be increased by an attempt to dismiss the practice altogether, or hide its importance. In an environment of education, with equal opportunity to learn and practice communication skills, the naturally gifted con man can be matched by the trained and 'sincere' performer. The audience can be made aware of

the skills at their disposal, so as not to be taken completely unaware by the implementation of performance technique.

Performance can perhaps be said to aid in the art of persuasion, but persuasion and manipulation are wrongly mistaken as the same thing. Reardon distinguishes between persuasion and its more aggressive counterparts by stating that

> "...persuasion is a form of communication in which every person who ventures forth into the company of others must participate...Manipulation involves furthering the goals of the manipulator at the expense of the person being manipulated...the situation is contrived to limit their choices...Coercion is another means of influencing behaviour that does not involve up-front reasoning. Coercion involved physical force or some kind of threat."
>
> (Reardon, 1991, p 1-2)

Historical evidence would indicate that politicians have, in certain circumstances, employed or attempted to employ all of the methods of controlled communication. However, it must be said that purely persuasive performance is generally not at the forefront of those situations. In the most easily identified cases of oppressive political leadership, manipulation and coercion were certainly used as a means of gaining and maintaining control. The concept of sincerity has less to do with the potential dangers of manipulation than it does the ideology of the sincere. Ultimately, the audience must decide who is the most 'sincere' performer: not in terms of their spontaneity, but their ultimate goal in communicating information.

Conclusion

The study of political performance and political audiences has implications for our broader understanding of politics. The avoidance of the performance aspect of politics has led to a superficial understanding of the communication process and a serious

misunderstanding of the role of spontaneity and sincerity in political life. Clearly, political performance is an area of study that requires attention and education. The various consequences outlined here are only an initial exploration of the importance of the study of political performance. As additional research is conducted, it will undoubtedly become clear that there are extensive, far-reaching implications for the politician and the political audience.

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3 An interesting study of this phenomenon is conducted in Moore, D. 2002: 156

4 See Miller, Lewis, Postman, and Berger

5 See also Moore and Palast

Conclusion

As the title of this thesis suggests, my purpose in undertaking this particular area of research was to discover what, if any, theoretical and practical commonalities exist between the professional actor and the political performer. It was my hypothesis that the politician would not only have a distinct connection to the actor, but that the politician and his or her audience could, in fact, benefit from a further understanding of that connection. The work compiled within this thesis indicates that there is a strong argument for the study of the politician as performer, and for the education of a political audience in that study.

This research highlights both the academic argument for political performance research, and some of the cultural challenges in current and future study.

First, it is clear that in applying performance theory to the political performer, one can gain new insights into the nature of political communication. For both the political performer and the political audience, our traditional ideas about the flow of political information can be informed by this approach.

Second, the practical skills of the professional actor can inform the communicative abilities of the political performer. In many instances, the political performer must operate within similar structures to the actor, but without training or even acknowledgement of the skill needed to communicate well. Media increases the need for a skilled and educated political communicator. Despite a historical trend that

distrusts performance within political communication, those politicians who exhibit performance skills are perceived as better communicators.

Third, anti-theatricalism has had a significant impact on the political performer and still poses a challenge to future research. The work of the political performer is highly scrutinised by the general audience and the media. Performance has still not been accepted as a 'sincere' method of political communication.

Fourth, political performance has a significant role in broader cultural studies. Understanding the political performer can have implications for other areas of cultural study, just as political performance can benefit from those other areas of study. In particular, media studies inform our understanding of the political performer and the audience that performer must engage.

It is perhaps an idealistic sentiment to suggest that through the study and basic awareness of performance technique politicians can be made equal in their ability to communicate. Like the professional performer, some individuals have an unnameable skill in communicating emotions, thoughts, ideas, or even in just attracting attention. It is what some have called 'charisma' or 'the X factor'. It is the aspect in one's performance that defies training and that cannot be taught.

That is not to say that the analysis of performance skills in politics is useless. The undefined relationship between the politician as performer and the population as audience needs to be addressed. The confusion in the sign system between the two affects the conduct of democracy and the audience should be educated in understanding

and interpreting the performances that comprise contemporary political dialogue. Perhaps total equality on a political level is not possible in any sense, but at least with the opportunity to recognise what skills are needed, the skilled mangers and social servants have a greater chance of competing with established political performers in various media. At the very least, they may reduce the disadvantage created by a lack of knowledge of the tools and media of communication.

Performance based communication requires a different set of critical skills than most of Western society is familiar with. Attempting to analyse television, radio, or even photography through a literary frame will result in inadequate conclusions. We cannot continue to rely on the frames provided for us by television itself. The presence of commentators and the arguments of programme 'experts' following a political performance only impose more information on an already jam-packed presentation, and run the risk of interfering directly by placing personal feelings in the context of objective fact. The audience who can interpret political performance without the input of commentators, and then apply the information to their prior knowledge of the situation is the audience least likely to be susceptible to emotional manipulation.

This level of conscious understanding is not as foreign as it may sound. Although critics have lamented television's immediacy and lack of context, there are examples of audiences formulating opinions based on the principles mentioned above. Long-running, fictional entertainment programmes accumulate large audiences who not only carefully interpret and respond to the performances and their presentation, but who relate information to previous episodes and evaluate new scenarios based on their understanding of a character's previous experiences and actions. It is not uncommon for

audience members to place fictional programmes in the clear context of past episodes, or even series, which can be months or years apart. They may also use their experiences with these programmes to inform their own life choices. (Sood, 2002, p 153) An audience is capable of interpreting audio-visual information, not only in terms of its immediate presentation, but in its larger contexts as well. They are also able to generate significant public discourse should they feel moved to do so. (Bratich, 2005, p 253)

This considered, why has this level of sophisticated and interactive viewing been focused on fictional programming? If the skills and interest are evident, why does the audience not extend the same interpretive skill to televised news presentations?

The answer is complex. Political performance has an established and antagonistic history with the public. It remains marred in a strange taboo, one that both accepts and demands it, and yet reproaches it as well. Political performance, as well as other filmed events that comprise the televised news, lack the clear framework that accompanies a fictional television programme. There is no immediate acceptance of the performance 'as such', and there is often little subject coherence maintained between each edition of the programmes. The television news, unlike the fictional programme, does not return to the same set of characters and the same location every night. It is guided by the most exciting stories of the day, presented in that particular order. It makes little effort to follow a complete political story through from beginning to end, since the 'story' may take even years to reach fruition, and the most exciting aspects occur only at the beginning and end. Therefore, relating characters and information to an ongoing, complete context, requires greater concentration, effort and perhaps some supplementary information.

In addition, the structure of television news is such that it seems to proclaim factual objectivity, thus limiting the opportunity for the audience to make their own judgements and assessments. Whereas the audience for the fictional drama is aware that the future of their characters is ultimately changeable and therefore open to influence, the format of television news stories discourages audience projection. Since each segment is structured as its own complete drama, each situation, no matter how uncertain, must be drawn to some conclusion. The 'wrap up' comments of the television interpreters give the impression that the conclusion to the situation is finite, and therefore beyond influence.

It is not performance that weakens the democratic process, but a serious lack of ability to interpret and objectively deconstruct those performances. Without understanding the goals and requirements of the political performer, we are left susceptible to manipulation and purely emotional appeals that in fact accomplish nothing.

At its best, political performance is not about attracting more attention to the individual's persona, but less. When the construction of a persona is not taken into consideration in a political candidate's career, there will inevitably be opportunities for the media to direct and focus attention on the personality flaws or quirks of an individual. If there is a personalised angle to follow, the media will certainly take it. A seamless performance and well-developed persona will limit the attention to personal detail and instead help establish the goals and policies of the individual or party.

Political performance does not exist as an entity separate from the media through which it is transmitted, whether that is television, radio, or stage. The mechanics of each

process will alter audience perceptions, as well as the performance itself. Therefore it is not enough for the performer and the audience to understand performance itself, they must also be knowledgeable of the media through which it travels.

Contribution to Knowledge

The preceding text uses existing data to explore the original hypothesis that the politician can and should be understood as a performer. Following a broad literature review, it was acknowledged that there was a gap in knowledge surrounding the study of the politician as performer and that the study of the political performer was warranted and necessary. This signifies a new and innovative means of understanding political performance, outside traditional methods associated with political communication.

Through this study, two key points that contribute to knowledge are raised. First, there are sufficient linkages to suggest that the politician can be understood as a political performer in both a theoretical and a practical sense. Second, the preceding conclusion indicates that the receivers of political performance (previously understood as a public) must therefore be understood as an audience. This second point raises considerable questions as to whether or not the audience is adequately informed as to the nature of their role in the interpretation of the performance.

As indicated in the introduction, the purpose of this thesis was not to suggest that politicians, and by relation the political audience, are *simply* performers or receivers. Instead it is suggested that this is a significant part of their roles and as such, is deserving of dedicated study.

That proven, this research signifies an important and necessary shift in the existing approaches to the study of politics and performance. Not only does it extend the study of performance and performativity, but it acknowledges the significance of these as both communicative tool and interpretive frame in politics. This points to a gap in the ability of the political audience to view and interpret political communications in a complete, educated context; a statement that has serious implications in an environment of citizen directed democracy.

The preceding chapters have attempted to highlight the significance of political performance in media, political and performance studies. Like any dramatic form, it is an evolutionary process that requires further analysis and monitoring. There is much to be learned from the study of this unique form of communication, and I would argue that this initial research is but the foundation for future study. It is my hope that this foundation research can be used as a "performance lens" through which political communication, and political audiences, can be understood. As society continues to change and accelerate its methods of communication, the need to fully understand mediated performance increases. Political performance will undoubtedly take on an even greater significance, and the body of research developed here can contribute to a better understanding of that process.

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